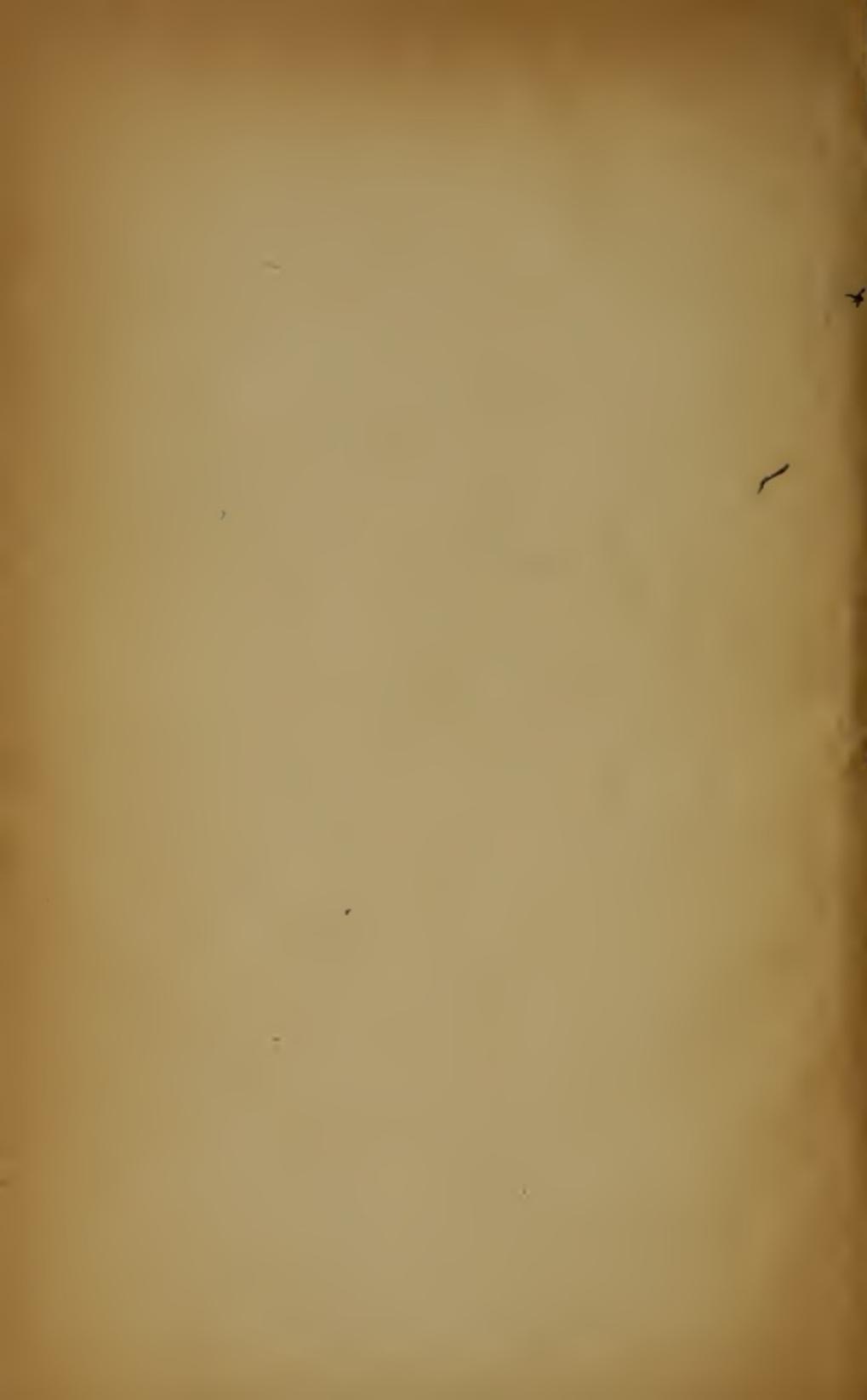




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OLGA ZANELLI

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A Tale of an Imperial City

BY

FAIRFAX L. CARTWRIGHT

" . . . dans cette vie
Rien n'est bon que d'aimer n'est vrai que de souffrir "

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CHAPTER I.

OF the clubs of Berlin perhaps the most luxuriously fitted up, and the one most in keeping with our English ideas of what a club-house should be, is the Jockey Club, situated in a little street which runs into that great thoroughfare of Berlin, the avenue called the Unter den Linden. Less exclusive than its rival, the dreary and solemn Casino of the officers, the Jockey Club counts among its members persons belonging to the highest aristocracy as well as wealthy Jew bankers and merchants, and even some individuals of questionable antecedents, the one bond of union between these discordant elements being a love of sports and of cards. The Jockey Club enjoys a great reputation in the sporting world of Germany, and on days when there is racing at Charlottenburg or Hoppegarten, it generally turns out a very respectable coach and four for the use of its members.

On that Sunday afternoon in the latter part of the month of April of the year 188—, there had been

racing of some importance at Charlottenburg ; and as the weather had been preternaturally fine and warm for that uncertain and changeable month, crowds of people had been attracted to the racecourse, and the Emperor himself had driven out and patronised the races for a short time. Many members who had sporting tastes had come up from the country for the day, so that on that evening the club-house was remarkably full. In the great saloon, hung with portraits of famous racehorses, a din of conversation was going on ; and if one listened attentively to it, one soon discovered that it was entirely about racing matters, bets and odds and other kindred subjects, with now and again disputes respecting the merits of a horse, and explanations why it had not won.

At the further end of the room were a group of persons, who were engaged in loud discussion. In the centre sat the Duke of Bummelberg, the head of the great family of the Hohenschwanzs. He was an elderly gentleman, easy-going and good-tempered, except when he was losing at cards, a patron of the turf, and an inveterate gambler. He was the possessor of an immense fortune, but of late he had somewhat impaired it by his reckless betting and gambling, in which occupations he was zealously assisted by his four sons, young lieutenants in various regiments of the Guards. He was president of the Jockey Club, and on account of this and of the great name he bore he was always treated with the greatest consideration by every one whenever he entered the club-house.

Opposite to him sat Herr Schlangenbeck, a tall, middle-aged, stoutish person, with a somewhat bloated

appearance. His history was rather curious. Born in a provincial town of Jewish parents in a small way of business, he had become at an early age a clerk in a Hamburg house trading with London. On one occasion he was sent to England on business ; he happened to arrive during the Derby week, and as he had heard so much about the great English carnival, he determined to go and see for himself what it was like. The impression it left upon him was immense ; it changed his whole aim in life. On returning to Hamburg he took seriously to the study of horse-racing ; he frequented the society of the few English jockeys and stable-boys who resided in that city, and he learnt to speak their slang, so that in after life his English always retained the flavour of the stable. Whenever his work as a clerk would allow of it, he would run over to England to attend the great race meetings, starving himself during many months to save the necessary funds for the journey, as well as to have something over to lay upon a horse. Gradually he succeeded in making the acquaintance of some of the persons connected with the great training establishments at Newmarket, and through them in course of time he got to be on speaking terms with several leading jockeys and trainers. The sporting foreigner became a great favourite. The racing information he succeeded in obtaining from his friends he used to such good purpose, that in a few years he had amassed by careful betting nearly a thousand pounds. Then with a sigh of relief he threw up his clerkship and turned his whole attention to racing matters, which just at that moment began to

attract considerable notice in Germany. He attended every meeting of any importance, laid bets wherever he could, generally with considerable benefit to himself, and so slowly and carefully he continued to increase his capital. Four years after throwing up his clerkship he made his first venture in buying a racehorse. That day he ever afterwards celebrated by giving an annual dinner to his friends. This horse, which was not much fancied, and which he was therefore enabled to pick up at a sale for a trifling sum, turned out to be for him a veritable gold mine. It won race after race ; and when at last it had to be retired to the stud, it continued to bring him in a steady income. This was the turning-point in his career ; from this moment he became known throughout Germany as a leading sportsman, and as one of the most successful racing men in the country. The number of his horses increased fast, and by a series of brilliant but questionable racing coups he amassed a fortune, which was now generally estimated at some three millions of marks. He then removed to Hoppegarten, near Berlin, where he built himself a house and splendid stables on an English model, and he invited an English jockey at a large salary to come and live with him, to take over the management of his stables, and to ride his horses. A short time before this story begins Herr Schlangenbeck crowned his career as a sportsman by being elected a member of the Jockey Club, which was, indeed, an honour for a person of whom it might well be said that he had almost risen from the gutter.

Another member of the group sitting round the

Duke of Bummelberg was Count Immersdorf. He was a man of about forty years of age, tall and spare, with a sardonic expression in his face. At the first glance one could see that he was a man who had led a fast life ; he looked much older than he was ; his face was deeply marked with lines, and he was already considerably bald. He came of a good family, and his uncle held a high and important post at Cout. He had been for several years an officer in the Guards, but he had had to retire on account of his debts, and at present he had no occupation ; yet in spite of his well-known financial difficulties he seemed to be generally well supplied with money. Of late he had become very intimate with Herr Schlangenbeck, and ill-natured people naturally said that he was employed by that great racing man to do dirty work for him, for which he received a liberal remuneration.

“ I can assure your Serene Highness my lord Duke,” said Herr Schlangenbeck, with a deferential but awkward manner, “ that so far as I know no horse of mine was ever pulled. Schlemil ran straight, and he was beaten because he was wanting in stamina. If your Serene Highness put money on my horse, I am sorry for it ; and had I been aware of your Serene Highness’s intentions, I would have saved you that loss.”

“ Confound the money ! ” replied the Duke. “ What do I care about the trifling loss ? But what I do object to is being swindled. If that jockey of yours did not pull Schlemil, I have no eyes in my head. Do you suppose that I frequent racecourses only since

we established a few years ago race meetings at Charlottenburg and Hoppegarten? I know from long date what the turf is in England. Talk of the blackguardism of the English turf, I can assure you, sir, that we need go no further than Charlottenburg to find its equal."

"I am sure your Serene Highness is mistaken," said Herr Schlangenbeck, making a very humble bow; "I know my jockey well, and feel confident that he did his best to win the race; but horses are very variable, and one must expect surprises on the turf."

"One is never disappointed," replied the Duke, with evident bad-humour.

"Schlemil is, after all, a very bad horse," interposed Count Immersdorf, with that peculiarly disagreeable smile which so frequently came over his face; "he generally starts favourite, and is usually last in the race. I am sure Herr Schlangenbeck has lost much money over him."

"Yes," said Herr Schlangenbeck, "the Duke is not the only loser to-day."

"We will drop this subject," replied the Duke, rather testily; "I hate the very name of your Schlemil. Ah! here comes the banker Grunnebaum; I shall go to the card-room to see what he will do to-night." Saying this he rose, and, after acknowledging as he passed the many greetings of "Good evening, Duke," this great personage disappeared behind the green baize swing-doors which led into the card-room.

Banker Grunnebaum, by his appearance an unmis-

takable Hebrew, was a partner in one of the great banking firms of Berlin. He was a short, puffy, greasy-looking individual, with great coarse hands and fingers, which he unconsciously kept continuously on the move, as if they felt unhappy at not being employed in dealing cards. He was very rich, and he was one of the most reckless gamblers who had ever been known at the Jockey Club. Of late he had produced quite a sensation by the large sums which he had won and lost, night after night, playing what is known by the name of "chouette" at écarté—that is to say, playing his hand all the time, and taking bets to any amount which members of the club might like to lay against him. A few nights before he had lost in this way a sum of nearly forty thousand pounds, and it was mentioned in the club, with admiration, that he had risen from the card-table apparently indifferent to his loss, and as cool as when he began to play.

The news that the Banker had gone into the card-room soon attracted every one there, so that in a short time Herr Schlangenbeck and Count Immersdorf were left alone. They rose and reseated themselves in a cosy nook formed by a Japanese screen ornamented with representations of fantastic birds, and, seeing that they were the only two persons in the room, they stretched themselves out at their ease in the comfortable arm-chairs provided by the club, and spoke to each other without reserve.

"I have made a pot of money over this race," said Herr Schlangenbeck, giving his neighbour a friendly pat on the back ; "and you are aware how badly

I wanted it. It is a paying thing when one is able to lay against one's own horses. Men who back horses without knowing anything about them are fools, and they must suffer for their folly. It is lucky for us that there are still a few men of large fortunes like the Duke, who, because they consider it to be the proper thing for persons in their position, lose their money freely, and pose as lovers of sport. It is a pity that our young officers should have more debts than cash, and that our financial men should prefer to spend their nights at the card-table than their afternoons on the racecourse. The turf in Germany is not a profitable business, and had I but started my career in England I would now be the possessor of a large fortune."

"Not a bad grumble," said the Count, "for a man who in the short space of ten years has accumulated a fortune of three million marks. You are mistaken if you think that no money is to be got out of our young Guard officers. I know of several who have but recently joined their regiments, and who possess considerable fortunes. Our paternal government, it is true, does all it can to prevent them from betting, but it does nothing to save them from losing their money at cards; yet I think that with a little tact and perseverance we might turn some of the money, which is nightly lost at the card-table, into our pockets by encouraging and giving facilities to these young and inexperienced officers to make bets with us."

"That is all very fine," replied Herr Schlangenbeck, but it is not a profitable business to bet with

persons who will not pay when they lose. When your officers are the bearers of great names, it is impossible for me to press them to pay if they are short of money ; to do so would be social suicide for me ; I should be immediately cold-shouldered by every member of this club ; but if I lose I am expected to pay immediately, or to be cut by every one. As I do not possess that magical prefix ‘von’ to my name, I prefer, as a rule, to have money dealings with other persons than with members of our nobility.”

“ My dear Schlangenbeck,” interrupted the Count, “ I could give yon the names of at least a dozen young men of means who have a taste for gambling, and who, with a little encouragement, and with facilities thrown in their way, would readily take to betting, and, what is perhaps of more importance to ourselves, would pay if they lost.”

“ I should be curious to hear their names,” remarked Herr Schlangenbeck.

“ It will not be difficult to satisfy you,” replied the Count. “ The first name which suggests itself to me is that of Count Dirnheim, who lately inherited the large fortune of his uncle ; he wants but little encouragement to spend his money. Moreover, I have been told that he intends to keep racehorses ; should he do so, we will have no difficulty in turning some of his gold into our pockets, for he knows no more about racehorses and the ways of the turf than can be learnt from a casual glance at the Derby from the Grand Stand, when your companions happen to be a beautiful woman and a bottle of champagne.

Then, of course, there is the Prince of Westphalia, who is spending a heap of money, and who keeps some good-for-nothing racehorses at Hoppegarten. He will come to grief before long, but I think we might make something out of him before he breaks."

"I doubt it," answered Herr Schlangenbeck, as he pulled out of his pocket a large handkerchief with his initials elaborately embroidered in one corner of it in staring colours, and began mopping his face, for the evening was unusually warm for the season,—"I doubt it, for the Prince has all the smartness and cleverness of the blackleg ; we will not find it so easy to fleece him."

"Let him go then," said the Count, with a disagreeable laugh ; "there are plenty more fools in the world who will serve our purpose. There is Baron Knechtshügel, one of those rich good-natured and weak men who seem to be sent into the world to be as it were a purse to their friends ; and there is also the Polish prince who recently married an heiress. I think that in his case we may apply the proverb, 'That money easily won is easily spent.'"

"Proverbs are proverbially wrong," retorted the racing man ; "but tell me, Count, what do you think of young Klinkenstein, who has just joined the Gardes du Corps ? He must be better off than most of our young officers, for his estates are said to be large, and there has been a long minority. He is a member of this club, and gambles a good deal ; but I have not been introduced to him yet."

"I hardly know him," answered Count Immers-

dorf, "beyond having seen him several times in the card-room, where he seems to me to have but little success. As to his fortune, I am creditably informed that it is considerable ; but his father spent a great deal of money, and I expect the estates are not free from mortgages."

"You seem to be well posted up in other people's affairs," said Herr Schlangenbeck, with a laugh. "Count, you would make a good adviser to a money-lender."

Count Immersdorf looked rather annoyed at the suggestion, and replied sharply : "I have made it my business, sir, to learn all I can about the financial position of people in society ; such information is always useful, and may sometimes be turned to very good account."

"I did not at all mean to blame you," said Herr Schlangenbeck, apoligising for the remark he had made. "The acquisition of knowledge, of whatever kind it may be, is always to be encouraged ; but, to return to our subject, tell me frankly what you think of Count Klinkenstein's character."

"I have not as yet obtained enough information respecting him to form a judgment ; but," continued the Count, "I have watched him carefully several times when he was playing at cards, and I should say that he was foolish, headstrong, nervous, and excitable."

"So much the better," chuckled the racing man ; "he may then be induced to take to betting ; and you, my dear Count, will have to persuade him to back my horses when they are not meant to win. My last

racing season was a very bad one. I must make some money this year."

"From what I hear," replied his neighbour, "I am not so sure that you will succeed in getting anything out of Count Klinkenstein. He gambles, it is true, to a certain extent ; but I am told that he is mean and stingy, and not at all fond of losing sight of his money."

"Confound the brute!" said Herr Schlangenbeck, with a loud voice ; "that is not the sort of young officer we want here in Berlin ; let him go into the provinces and make economies there."

"You may judge the man from what I will tell you," continued Count Immersdorf. "I have been assured by persons who ought to know that Count Klinkenstein has behaved very badly to his sister. She was left very little by her father's will ; and as her husband is not rich she is almost in want for a person of her social position, and yet her brother has declined to help her in any way. As she is said to be young and pretty, she will be reduced to taking a wealthy lover, who will keep the household going."

"It is a lie!" shouted a young officer wearing the uniform of the Gardes du Corps, who had just entered through the noiseless swing-doors of the card-room, and who had caught the last remarks made by Count Immersdorf. The two gentlemen who had been talking together rose from their seats as the young officer, livid in the face, came up to them, shouting again, "It is a lie, and you know it ! Sirs, mind your own affairs, and leave my sister alone. What right have you got to spread calumnies about me ? Far

from having refused my sister anything, I have settled money on her against the advice of several members of my family. I expect an apology from you, sir, for what you have said, or you will have to give me satisfaction."

Very red in the face, standing and wiping the perspiration from his brow, Herr Schlangenbeck mumbled, "I assure you, Count, that I never for a moment believed what was said about you."

"I do not care what you believe," retorted the young officer; "my business is not with you, but with Count Immersdorf, who made these statements regarding me."

There followed a few moments of silence, after which Count Immersdorf replied in a slow and deliberate manner, as if he was carefully weighing every word he was about to speak: "I beg to express to you, Count Klinkenstein, my very great regret that anything I have said should have given you offence. The remarks I made with regard to your sister were but the repetition of what I had heard from persons who ought to have been well informed. I am delighted to hear that they were wrong, and I therefore beg to apologise now for having given currency to rumours which I find had no foundation."

"You are then only the wretched circulator of scandalous gossip!" said Count Klinkenstein, with a look of contempt. "I pity you, Count, that you should lend yourself to such a trade; but before I can accept your apology I must insist on your telling me the names of the persons from whom you heard these rumours about my sister and myself."

"Let every man look after himself," was the sentiment which passed through Count Immersdorf's mind at that moment, so without hesitation he replied : "I have no objection to telling you their names. Quite recently I was dining at Baden with Colonel von Bergmann, Captain von Hahn, and Herr Nader, the owner of racehorses ; the statements were made by the latter, and were not denied by the other two, and I was therefore led to believe that they were true."

"Very good," said Count Klinkenstein, writing down the names in his pocket-book ; "they will have to account to me for their slanders." Then he turned his back upon the two gentlemen to whom he had been talking, and began walking up and down the room in an agitated state.

"A very hot-headed youth," whispered Herr Schlangenbeck to his companion ; "it seems to me that you got out of your difficulty pretty well."

"I am too old a hand," replied the Count, "to be enticed into fighting duels about nothing. The devil take the fellow's sister and himself ! What business of mine is their reputation ? Let those who care about it fight ; I certainly shall not. A man must indeed be a fool who would fight a duel about a woman's reputation. If she be honest, what matters it what people say about her ? and if she be frail, will she recover her good name by my letting myself be pricked through with a sword ? My dear Schlangenbeck, I am of Iago's opinion, that reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving. Come, let us leave this fellow alone ; he is capable of calling us out for merely

looking at him." Then he took Herr Schlangenbeck's arm, and the two went into the card-room.

Count Klinkenstein continued walking up and down the room absorbed in himself, and taking no notice of the waiters who now and again passed through, bearing on a tray numerous pots of frothy beer for the thirsty players in the card-room, and who no doubt thought to themselves that he was another young officer who had been playing high and had lost more money than he could afford to pay.

"What shall I do?" said Count Klinkenstein to himself; "if I go to Baden-Baden and challenge any one, I must call out the three; I cannot pick and choose between them, and it is certain that if I have to fight three duels I will be seriously wounded in one of them, if I am lucky enough to escape being killed. Why on earth did those two talk so loud that I could not help hearing what they said! Every day people spread about lies with regard to their neighbours, but do people fight about such things? I would have done much better to have taken no notice of what they were saying. What a fool I was to rush in like a lunatic and insult them! What good will my fighting these duels do me? Every one will consider me a fool for my pains; and if I am lucky enough to escape unhurt, I will have to spend several months in a fortress as punishment for my conduct. What a pleasant prospect for me, who was amusing myself so well here! This is a nice beginning to my life in Berlin. What will my sister say when, in a day or two, she perhaps hears that I am dead or seriously wounded? Will she thank me for having thus taken

up her cause? I doubt it. Why cannot men leave my family affairs alone? Are they of such general interest to the world to justify their becoming a common subject of conversation, or have these men nothing else to occupy their thoughts with but scandalous gossip? How can people say that I refused my sister money? Have I not done all I could for her? It makes me mad that men should say that I am stingy. What do I care for the money? I would throw it in the faces of these blackguards if they were in want of it. Yes! I will prove to them that I am neither stingy nor a coward. I will fight till I can no longer stand. I will call them all out, every one of them, and the more the better."

Count Klinkenstein had approached a writing-table, and nervously clutching an inkstand, he brought it down again upon the table with a dash, so that the ink spurted out in every direction. "What have I done?" he said to himself, calming down; "I am always impetuous and doing foolish things."

Then he sat down at the table, and, after a few moments' thought, took a sheet of note-paper, and wrote a letter to his colonel, asking for a few days' leave of absence on urgent private affairs. Having finished it, he touched the knob of the electric bell on the table, and when a servant appeared he said to him, with a perfectly calm voice,—

"I am afraid there has been a little accident here; I have spilled some ink; please have it wiped up. I also want a messenger to take this note to the colonel of the Gardes du Corps. He must wait for an answer, and bring it to my lodgings."

Then he rose, and humming to himself a gay tune out of the latest new operette, he descended slowly the fine marble staircase of the club ; the porter, seeing him come, was ready with his cloak and cap, and Count Klinkenstein, having lit a cigarette and cast a look at the last telegrams which were posted up in the hall, left the club and walked home.

CHAPTER II.

EDWARD, Count of Klinkenstein, a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, Count Brink in the Kingdom of Saxony, a baron of various places, etc., was descended of a very ancient Saxon family, whose name had frequently figured in the history of that country. On the banks of the Elbe, a short distance below Dresden, lay the Castle of Klinkenstein, the ancestral home of the family. It was a great pile of buildings, irregularly built and covering a great deal of ground. The style of architecture belonged to different epochs. The façade to the river had undoubtedly formed part of the ancient castle, which had been mostly destroyed during the Thirty Years' War ; the donjon tower had also survived those troublous times, and when viewed from the river, half hidden behind the tall elms of the park, it certainly gave an air of antiquity to the place. The greater portion, however, of the house had been rebuilt in later times. One of the Counts Klinkenstein, who lived in the days of the luxurions Augustus the Strong, had added to one side of the buildings an imposing gateway, covered with stucco ornaments and reliefs in the rococo style, so much in vogue in France during the early part of the eighteenth century. In those days it was the fashion for German noblemen to affect to despise the language

and customs of their own country, and to imitate the French court in all matters of taste, fashion, and literature.

In the interior the house was uninviting and cold. The great hall, with its stags' heads and dusty family portraits and its pavement of stone slabs, looked dismal and dark ; and the staircase, a remnant of the old castle, gave you the impression that it led rather to a prison than to the family apartments of a wealthy nobleman. Most of the furniture dated back to the last century, and the velvet and silk coverings of chairs and sofas had a faded look about them. There was a want of comfort everywhere. The bedrooms, vast and high, contained but little furniture beyond elaborately carved and inlaid four-post bedsteads, with beautiful curtains of brocaded or embroidered silk. But scattered about the rooms were curios of every sort : clocks with intricate works and quaint surprises, rare bronzes from Italy, precious candelabra of Venetian glass, dainty cabinets of inlaid work, and endless odds and ends, the sight of which would have excited the cupidity of a connoisseur and collector. There was also a cabinet full of porcelain, which had been locked up for years, and where the dust of a century had accumulated, so little interest had the later counts taken in its contents ; yet it contained inestimable ceramic treasures : porcelain from China and Japan, brought to Europe more than two centuries ago by the Dutch ; Nankin ware, which would fetch a fabulous price ; Dresden china from the first days of its manufacture ; and not a few specimens of Sevres porcelain of the best period, of Nymphenburg white ware and

Dutch faïence. There was also a canary-yellow tea service made at the royal factory of Berlin, and presented by Frederick the Great to the dilettante Count Klinkenstein who had been the collector of all these treasures. The later members of the family had shown more taste for hunting and shooting than for the collection of works of art.

Round the castle lay the great park, studded with old and venerable trees, and stretching for a considerable distance along the banks of the river Elbe. The gardens were as old-fashioned as the house, and might have been planned by Le Notre ; but they were the great charm of the place, for here one could find life and verdure and sunshine ; here were delightful charmilles turning and twisting in every direction ; here were to be found masses of roses and flowers, fountains of strange device, and pretty little waterfalls tumbling over artificial rocks. In retired nooks one would come across statues of classical heroes overgrown with lichen, and showing unmistakable signs of the ravages of age. Then there were lawns where the trees were cut into fantastical shapes ; yews that were made to resemble cypresses, Portugal laurels that were trimmed to imitate orange trees, and bushes of box that were tortured to spread out like umbrellas. Nor were there wanting endless shady walks, where at a turn a surprise would await you, such as an opening cut through the foliage, so that you got a distant view of the country as through a window.

Not far from the house stood the village, with its neat cottages and picturesque red-roofed church, built on a slight elevation, and round which lay the church-

yard, dotted with a few fine trees, and overgrown with grass and wild flowers, which almost hid the more ancient and neglected tombstones. The interior of the church, however, was bare and uninviting, as Lutheran churches usually are; an ugly wooden gallery ran down two sides of it, and over the entrance was a massive organ, which had been given by a former Count Klinkenstein,—a fulsome inscription in Latin commemorated this event. On one side of the church stood the burial chapel of the family, richly decorated, it is true, but in sufficiently bad taste. It was separated from the rest of the church by a high iron railing, overloaded with gilding and ornaments. In this mortuary chapel were numerous statues of angels blowing upon trumpets, bas-reliefs running round the cornice representing the virtues, crosses in marble not a few, as well as other emblems of the Christian faith; but what struck the eye most were the two great monuments which had been erected on either side of the entrance. One of them was to the memory of the count who had been a collector of china and bric-à-brac; in the centre stood a bust of the deceased bolt upright. This elegant courtier, in his carefully powdered wig, who had probably never worn anything else but elaborately embroidered coats, was represented here in armour, holding his helmet in one hand and his commander's baton in the other, as was only right and proper in a person who was born a Count of Klinkenstein. Over his head, arranged in the form of a baldacchino and descending on either side, were heavy marble curtains, on which the artist had been at pains to imitate the texture of silk and brocade. Two life-size female

figures held up the curtains on either side : the one represented Charity and the other Chastity, and they were each properly furnished with the emblems of their professions. As to the count's charity, his descendants only knew that in his zeal for collecting he had encumbered the family estates, and that many of his treasures had had to be sold after his death ; while with regard to the other virtue, all that the world knew was that the Count had died unmarried.

The other monument, erected at the end of the last century, was in the very worst taste. It consisted of a pyramid of many-coloured marbles, nearly reaching to the ceiling. On its surface a group of weeping angels had been carved, who held up a medallion portrait of the deceased. Below was a figure of Death, rising as it were out of a tomb, and represented as a skeleton in a winding-sheet, holding a scythe in one hand and a run-out hour-glass in the other. In the corners of the pyramid were counts' coronets and the blazons of the family : a Latin inscription told you of the virtues of the defunct, his premature death, and the great things which he would have done had he but lived longer.

These monuments were the pride of the villagers, who were sincerely attached to the house of Klinkenstein; and the old verger, who had seen many a member of the family brought home to his last resting-place in these vaults, on the rare occasions when he took a stranger round, would expect, in addition to his fee, a proper tribute of reverence and admiration for these works of art. It was a relief to turn away from the pomposity of these monuments and the bareness of the interior of the building, and to be greeted on

stepping out of the church door by a view of the open country far as the distant forest of fir and pine, and to catch occasional glimpses of the Elbe shining like a silver streak through the foliage of the trees.

Henry, Count of Klinkenstein, the father of the present owner of this property, had at an early age entered the diplomatic service of Saxony. He served as secretary in various places, and while at St. Petersburg married a Russian lady. Soon after this event the unexpected death of his uncle left him the owner of the Klinkenstein properties, and made him the head of the house. Till then he had been comparatively poor; but now that he had become a person of much importance in his own country, it was evident that he could no longer be kept in the subordinate position of a secretary, and he therefore was offered and accepted the appointment of Saxon minister to the Court of Tuscany. With delight the count turned his back upon the dreary northern capital; for he hated cold and snow, and had long pined for the blue sky of Italy, her flowers and her beauty of nature. In Florence he hired a sombre-looking palace, much too large for himself and family; but then the count loved show, and had taken a fancy to the imposing staircase open to the sky, and to the noble suite of saloons, dark no doubt in the daytime, but which, when lit up at night, looked so well, with their walls hung with ancient damask and tapestries, and with their ceilings of open rafters, on which were blazoned the arms of the owners and the family alliances. Here the count lived in great state, spending much money, and with the help of his wife—who, like so many Russian ladies of noble family, was

a real *grande dame*—kept a salon and open house, and year by year he got to be fonder and fonder of his new home. For ten years Count Klinkenstein lived happily in Florence; but in the year 1866, in the early days of the war, he caught diphtheria and died. It was perhaps as well that he did so at that moment, for he was sincerely attached to the old order of things in Germany, and it would have been a great blow to him had he witnessed the invasion of his country and the unexpected growth of the power of Prussia.

He left two children, a girl and a boy. The girl, the elder of the two, was born in St. Petersburg, and as the happy event was announced to the count while he was returning from the opera-house, where he had been to witness the pretty ballet of *Gisèle*, he gave his daughter that name. It was several years later that the count, who was then minister in Florence, was gratified with the birth of a boy, who would carry on the main line of the house of Klinkenstein. The child received the name of Edward, after his uncle, Count Eckstein, now a general in the Prussian army.

On the death of the count it was found that his affairs were much involved ; he had spent a great deal of money, and had hardly ever visited his estates ; they had consequently been badly managed, but the prospect of a long minority gave hope that the young boy on coming of age would still be the possessor of a considerable fortune. The mother and Count Eckstein were appointed guardians of the children ; and the countess, having become too much attached to Florence to leave it, hired a villa on the slopes of Fiesole, to which she retired. In the large garden of the villa the

children could romp about at their pleasure ; and the countess, without losing sight of them, could stroll along the terraces beneath the shade of ilex trees, and gaze upon the city at her feet where she had spent so many happy days. The Countess Gisele grew up a lovely child ; she was of a docile and gentle nature ; whereas the boy was wild and reckless, hating his lessons, and never happy unless he was out in the open air.

When the girl was fifteen years of age and the boy ten their mother died. Count Eckstein came out and took the children with him to Dresden, where they were left in charge of an old aunt ; and the boy, whose education had been neglected, was daily sent to the "gymnasium" of the place. He hated his new life, and longed for the garden at Fiesole, where he had been allowed to do as he pleased. What a difference it was to have to sit now all day before a desk in a white-washed room, and to have Greek and Latin, for which he cared not a jot, thumped into his head, and to be teased and called a foreigner by the boys because at first he spoke German with difficulty ! But the young count was strong and vigorous in the arms, and he never lost a chance of giving his school-fellows a thrashing, and he succeeded in this way in acquiring a certain amount of prestige and respect.

The young Countess Gisele was also unhappy in her new home, for she had grown to be half Italian in feeling, and she pined for her blue sky and warm sun, and could feel no sympathy for her prim old aunt and for the other girls into whose society she was now thrown in Dresden. During the holidays the

children were taken either to the Castle of Klinkenstein or to Count Eckstein's place in Pomerania. But they never became attached to their ancestral home ; they felt lost all alone in that large dreary house, and they were therefore always glad to escape from its dulness and to go to their uncle's place, where they had at least a companion, their pretty cousin, the Countess Eleanora, who was a few years younger than the boy. She was generally called by the family the Countess Nelly, the pet name which her English governess had given her.

Thus brother and sister grew up in close intimacy, and became devoted to each other. As their present life and surroundings were so distasteful to them, they would naturally often recall to each other the happiness of their young days, and look forward to a time when they would both be free to again do as they pleased. In due time the Countess Gisele was presented at the Saxon Court ; and the local press, in describing the event and the charms of the young countess, made use of its usual fulsome and exaggerated language. Many young officers proposed to her during her first season ; but they met with little success, for the Countess Gisele cared not a bit for the military element, and she hated to hear the eternal clinking of spurs and to meet in society nothing but uniforms and *pickelhaubes*. To escape from the society of Dresden she accepted the advances of a Count Falkenberg, a chamberlain at the Austrian Court. He was a man of ancient lineage, he was a good deal older than herself, and his fortune, though not large, was sufficient, but what made him attractive

to her was that his tastes were different from those of the other men she had met, in that he had a passion for art and for literature. On the whole, the marriage proved a happy one, and she became in time sincerely attached to him.

Count Klinkenstein continued at school for several years after the marriage of his sister, hating his life there more and more, and longing for the time when he would be delivered from the pedagogues and be allowed to go in search of his own experiences of life. At last the day came for the final examinations, which, not without difficulty, he succeeded in passing. He thereby acquired the privilege of serving only one year in the ranks instead of three, and so towards the end of his nineteenth year he donned the uniform of a common soldier in a Saxon regiment. When his term of service was over, he had nearly reached his majority, and he retired to his ancestral home to await there patiently the arrival of that eventful day, which would completely emancipate him from the control of others. His coming of age was naturally a great event in the family, and as many of his relatives as could be gathered together met at the Castle of Klinkenstein to celebrate the day. In the morning his guardian, Count Eckstein, handed over to him the management of his estates, giving him an account of his stewardship, and informing him that he was now the possessor of an income of over six thousand pounds a year. The first act of Count Klinkenstein, much against the advice of his uncle and his other relatives, was to settle an annuity of a thousand pounds a year upon his sister ; so one may well imagine his anger

when he heard that night at the club that there were people who said that he had behaved badly to her and refused her money.

In the evening after the banquet brother and sister went out into the garden, for it was a warm July night, with nearly a full moon shining through the trees ; they strolled together through the charmilles and the walks, and recalled to each other for the hundredth time the happy days of their early childhood in Florence. The Countess Gisele was full of joy and enthusiasm, for she could now afford to live in Italy. She spoke to her brother of his future life, and expressed a hope that he would take to some profession, and not remain idle. She wished him to enter diplomacy, like their father ; but he replied, " My uncle will not hear of it, for he says that a Count Klinkenstein ought to have but one profession : he should be a soldier."

" Those are prejudices of caste," she replied, " for every profession is noble if its aim is worthy. Why should the arts of war be considered more estimable than the arts of peace ? It seems to me that our nobility is full of illusions. Because the social line dividing them from the rest of the population is so marked, they have been led to believe that a similar line runs through all the professions and relations of life. It is unfortunate that a man of birth in this country must either be idle all his life, or he must choose between entering the profession of arms or becoming a chamberlain at Court ; there is no other opening for him, unless he wishes to outrage the feelings of his family and be considered an eccentric.

Take my advice, my dear Edward ; do not stay long in the provincial society of a small capital like Dresden, for your feelings and thoughts will only get narrowed thereby. If you must have no profession, now that you are young and independent, travel at least and see the world. Next week I leave for Italy ; join me there, and we will revisit Florence together, and the garden at Fiesole where we spent our youth."

He consented, for the idea of seeing Italy again pleased him, and he felt a strong desire to get away from the uninteresting society in which his boyhood had been spent, and he longed to see new faces and new cities, and to be free to indulge in adventures of all kinds.

The guests had left the castle, and Count Klinkenstein, finding the place intolerably dull now that he was left alone, was hurrying on the preparations for the journey he proposed to undertake with his sister, when he received a peremptory telegram from his uncle summoning him to Berlin. He left by the next train, and what was his surprise when Count Eckstein informed him that he had procured for him a commission as an officer in the Gardes du Corps. It required little persuasion to make him accept it ; for Berlin, which he had not as yet visited, seemed to him to be a large and populous city, where amusements and pleasures could surely be found ; so giving up the idea of going to Italy with his sister, Count Klinkenstein appeared a few days later wearing the uniform of a sub-lieutenant in the proud regiment of the Gardes du Corps.

CHAPTER III.

ON leaving the Jockey Club Count Klinkenstein went straight to his rooms. He at once summoned his faithful servant Hans, who had been born and bred on one of the Klinkenstein properties, and who had served with his father and been attached to the young Count from his earliest years. When he appeared Count Klinkenstein said to him : " Go at once to Baron Zerbino, and beg him to come and see me as quickly as possible. Tell him that I must see him to-night."

Count Klinkenstein, who was living out of barracks, had taken rooms on the first floor of a house situated in the Friedrichstrasse, the noisiest thoroughfare in Berlin, and nearly at the corner where that street crosses the avenue of the Unter den Linden. He had two large comfortable sitting-rooms, which he had furnished with Eastern carpets and divans, and draped with Japanese embroideries and Indian silks of gaudy hues. On the walls were hung engravings of the latest nudities from the Paris Salon, for the Count was a great admirer of female beauty, and very amorously inclined.

" You look pale and unwell to-night," remarked the servant, as he divested his master of his cloak and cap, and removed his sword.

"Never mind," replied Count Klinkenstein, sharply; "go about your business and fetch the Baron ; if he is not at home, ascertain where he is spending the evening ; follow him then from place to place until you have found him, and deliver my message. Do you understand ? I must see him to-night."

Hans retired without venturing any more remarks, but he thought to himself that surely something strange had happened to his master, for he had never before seen him in such a petulant state. A few minutes later the slamming of the house door informed the Count that the faithful Hans had gone upon his errand.

Baron Zerbino was a young man of about twenty-seven years of age, and one of the secretaries of the Italian Embassy. He had come to Berlin about the same time that Count Klinkenstein had joined the Gardes du Corps, and very soon a great intimacy had sprung up between the two, for Count Klinkenstein was one of those men of weak character who feel the want of having a companion always near them and who would be miserable if left to themselves. By the Baron's appearance one would never have thought that he was a Southerner, for he had the fair complexion and hair of a Teuton ; in stature he was small, and he was the possessor of a particularly shrill voice, which irritated one's nerves, especially when, in the middle of a friendly discussion, he would take to shouting at the top of his voice. He was absolutely free from shyness,—one might almost say that he was pushing and devoid of modesty ; but, in spite of many faults, he was liked by those who knew him well, for he was really a

tender-hearted creature, and ready to put himself to inconvenience for his friends. He had spent some years at the Italian Embassy in London, and while there had learnt to speak English with fluency ; he left it with regret, and came to Berlin a confirmed Anglomaniac. Such was the person Count Klinkenstein had selected to be one of his seconds in the duels which he contemplated fighting.

When his servant had left the room, Count Klinkenstein threw himself on a divan, and buried his head in his hands. He could not help reviewing in his mind what his past life had been during the last seven or eight months since he had been in Berlin : much going into society, much running after actresses and ballet girls ; many supper parties, lasting into the early hours of the morning ; much hard drinking, card playing, and losing of money ; and now it would probably all end with his death in a few days. He could not help wishing that he had followed his sister's advice and gone to Italy ; he would have been really happier with her than leading the life he had done of late in Berlin. But such regrets were vain, and the consequences of his impetuosity and rashness were facing him in the form of three duels which it seemed impossible for him to avoid.

Count Klinkenstein had been occupied with these meditations for more than an hour when a ring at his door made him get up to open it, as his servant had gone out. He hoped it would be his friend the Baron, for whom he was anxiously waiting ; but it proved to be only a messenger from his colonel, with an answer to the letter he had sent asking for

a few days' leave of absence. It was a civil note, in which the colonel granted him his request. The receipt of it roused Count Klinkenstein from his dreams and meditations to a perception of the reality of his position, and to a remembrance of the many preparations he had to make before starting. There were rapiers and swords and pistols enough in his room to select from, and he now proceeded to examine the blades of his rapiers carefully, and to test them by making passes in the air at imaginary adversaries. Having selected those he wanted, he sat down at his writing-table, and with a great effort wrote a letter to his sister, which should be given to her in the event of his death. It was a mournful composition, full of regrets at the pain he had caused her, of sorrow that he would probably see her no more, and of expressions of calm resignation to the consequences of his rash act which had led him into fighting these duels ; he avoided, however, mentioning that it was for her sake that he was risking his life. He had just put the letter into an envelope, and written out instructions that it was only to be posted four days hence, if he had not returned by then, when the shrill voice of Baron Zerbino was heard on the staircase, shouting, "Klinkenstein, are you at home ?" The Count jumped up, and hastening to the door, let in the little Baron.

"What is the matter with you, old fellow ? You seem very agitated indeed. Has one of your neglected loves threatened to throw vitriol over you ?" inquired the Baron, as Hans, who had returned, helped him to divest himself of his cloak, exposing the small

person of the Italian attired in faultless evening dress, with a gardenia in the button-hole, and with an immaculate shirt front decorated with a large central stud of brilliant gems, for the Baron was nothing if not English in his ways and dress. As Count Klinkenstein and the Italian nobleman both spoke English and French with fluency, their conversation was usually carried on in one of those two languages.

"My dear Zerbino, please do not joke, for the matter is far too serious," said the Count, who then turned to his servant and ordered him to pack up enough things to last for a few days, and to leave the room.

"What is the meaning of all these weapons?" asked the Baron, with surprise. "Do you propose to fight a duel?"

"That is exactly what I want to do, Zerbino, and I would like you to be one of my seconds."

"Stuff and nonsense!" shrieked the Baron; "my dear Klinkenstein, what have you been doing to-night since I left you? Have you been making love to another man's wife, and been kicked out of the house in consequence? Tell me all about it, and let me know the name of the person you are going to fight with. I do not mind being one of your seconds, for the 'Code du Duel' says that the first duty of a good second is to try and prevent a duel from taking place."

Baron Zerbino had himself fought several duels, and his library was full of books on the subject, so that he was well competent to express an opinion as to how one might take another man's life according to the rules of honour.

Count Klinkenstein then related to his friend what had occurred that night at the Jockey Club, and he added, "Now do not try and dissuade me from fighting ; that I must challenge these persons is inevitable ; if I do not do so it will be impossible for me to remain a day longer in my regiment. Every one will know to-morrow that I had a scene with Count Immersdorf at the club, and that I swore that I would call out the three men who had spoken disparagingly of me ; to back out of it now would be cowardly ; it is impossible for an officer of the Guards to bluster, and then to do nothing. I will leave to-morrow morning early for Baden-Baden. Will you accompany me ?"

"I will," replied the Baron, laying aside his chaff and assuming for once a serious look ; "but you must let yourself be guided entirely by me, and you must promise to do nothing rashly. I must confess that I do not see the absolute necessity of your fighting at all. If it turns out to be true that the colonel and his friends made these statements reflecting upon you and your sister, I feel sure that they will not hesitate to apologise when it is pointed out to them that they made statements which were unfounded."

"Apologise !" exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, turning round sharply upon his friend. "Do not talk nonsense, Zerbino. Do you suppose that three men are going to apologise from fear of me ? You seem to imagine that I have the reputation of being a crack duellist like Cassagnac or Rochefort. They will laugh at the idea of my asking them to apologise. Apologise, indeed !

Good God ! They will do nothing of the sort ; they will fight and kill me. Do not irritate me with useless suppositions."

" If they are gentlemen, as I have no reason to doubt they are, I do not see why they should be ashamed of apologising, if they find that they were mistaken. Klinkenstein, when does the train leave to-morrow ? "

" At seven."

" I shall meet you at the station," said the Baron, putting on his cloak ; " and now, good-night, Klinkenstein ; it is nearly one o'clock. I must leave you, for you are in a very excited state, and the best thing for you to do under the circumstances is to go to bed and sleep. When one is about to fight a duel one's nerves ought to be calm and in good order."

" I am afraid that it is no use my trying to sleep to-night," replied the Count, accompanying his friend to the door. " I feel in a strange state at present, and my mind is full of thoughts. Good-night, and many thanks for coming with me to-morrow, and pray do not be late."

The next morning Count Klinkenstein, having discarded his uniform and assumed civilian dress, arrived early at the station, looking haggard and worn, like a man who has passed an anxious and sleepless night. His servant, Hans, had charge of his luggage, which consisted chiefly of pistol cases, rapiers, and swords. It was not till the train was on the point of starting that the little Baron appeared upon the platform, and he had only just time to jump in before the train began to move out of the station.

" You run it rather fine," said Count Klinkenstein,

rather ill-humouredly ; " you would have put me to a great inconvenience if you had been left behind."

" Never mind, Klinkenstein," replied Zerbino ; " it is all right now ; I shall be present to pick you up if you get killed."

It was one of the Baron's habits to be invariably late, as he thought that it was the proper thing, and always done in England.

" How depressed you are this morning, to be sure," he continued ; " this will never do ; a man cannot fight a duel in the state you are in."

And then the good-natured Baron indulged in jokes, which had but little effect upon the Count, and he tried to raise his friend's spirits by giving him an account of many famous duels, and pointing out to him how very few had proved fatal ; he also assured him that he saw no reasons why in a few days they should not both return safe and sound, and that it was a ridiculous thing to look at the worst side of things. But the Count's ears were closed to all attempts to raise his spirits, and he lay in the corner of the carriage silent and depressed, thinking over the folly of the social law which compelled him to travel a long distance to try and kill a man he did not know, or, what was much more probable, to get killed himself.

It was dark by the time they reached Baden-Baden, and the two friends, entering a cab, drove in silence to an hotel, for even the Baron's spirits were beginning to be depressed by contact with the gloominess of Count Klinkenstein. They ordered supper, but neither of them felt much inclined to eat, and they both of them soon retired to pass a restless night.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was early in the morning when Hans brought his master some coffee, and found him already dressed and looking out of the window, from which there was an extensive view of the valley of the Oes and the hills of the Black Forest. It was a beautiful day at the latter end of April ; the trees were unusually full of sprouts and buds, the sun was shining warm and bright, and Nature seemed to the Count to be more full of beauty and loveliness than he had ever noticed before. The faithful retainer, who was now aware what the object of the journey was, kept fussing about the room hoping that his master would begin talking to him, as was his wont when he brought him his breakfast in the morning ; but on this occasion Count Klinkenstein remained silent, wrapped up in the contemplation of the landscape before him. At last Hans, unable to bear it any longer, ventured to ask whether he should pour out some coffee, but he had to repeat his question a second time before his master took any notice of him, who, turning round sharply, replied,—

“ You are an old idiot, Hans ! Take the beastly stuff away, and bring me some brandy ; I feel very ill. Where is the Baron ? Is he not yet up ? I suppose you have forgotten to call him ? ”

Hans disappeared as quickly as possible, for he had

never been addressed so roughly before. When he returned with the brandy he was followed by Baron Zerbino, who had hurriedly slipped on a pair of flannel trousers and a gaudy dressing-gown.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Klinkenstein? What is the meaning of calling me up so early, and sending for brandy? Are you ill?"

"I do not know, but I feel very queer. What o'clock is it?"

"Just past seven; now do not be foolish, Klinkenstein, go to bed again, as I mean to do; who ever thinks of getting up at this hour! It is to-morrow morning that you will have to get up early, if the duel takes place at all, not to-day. As yet you have not so much as challenged your adversary."

"Zerbino, I want you to come with me at once to do so. I cannot stand this suspense any longer; I must get the business over as quickly as possible."

"You are perfectly mad, Klinkenstein! You expect me to accompany you at this early hour of the morning in order to challenge a person we neither of us know. I never heard of anything so ridiculous. If we went at present we should probably find the gentleman in bed; moreover, I am not yet dressed, and have not even had my breakfast, and I hold it to be wicked to look upon the world till one has had one's proper amount of sleep, otherwise one feels out of sorts and sees everything in black colours. I shall certainly return to my bed, and I strongly advise you to do the same."

"It is impossible," replied the Count, taking his hat and stick. "I cannot stay here; I shall go and

take a walk by myself." So Count Klinkenstein left the room, and the little Baron returned to his bed to sleep for another hour or two.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the Count returned, for he had taken a long walk, and the quiet and freshness of the forest and the resinous smell of the pines had done him good, and he was much calmer. Baron Zerbino was now ready, and he was seated on a bench at the hotel door smoking a cigarette and waiting for the return of his friend. He had dressed himself with great care for the solemn business which he had in hand. He was wearing trousers of a light colour decorated with rather large checks. He had on a frock coat, with a flower in his button-hole, and an aggressively large diamond pin was stuck in his tie. It was difficult to decide which was the more brilliant, his immaculate top hat or his varnished boots.

"One would think you were going to be married," remarked Count Klinkenstein, as he came up. "What is the meaning of such a turn-out on an occasion like this?"

"I like everything done in proper style," retorted the Baron. "It seems to me that to go and challenge a man is quite as serious a business as to get married. Then why should you dress well upon the one occasion, and not upon the other?"

"Do as you like, Zerbino; but I must confess that you seem to take the matter very lightly. It is hardly a time for masquerading. Come along; let us get the business over before lunch."

"Masquerading!" shrieked the Baron, in his shrillest voice. "Do you call it masquerading to be dressed

as a gentleman would be in Paris or London? My dear Klinkenstein, you people in Berlin have no idea of what it is to be well dressed. Walk any day down your Unter den Linden, and look at the men of good position you meet there. If they are not in uniform, they are dressed like gnys; coats cut like sacks, trousers which do not fit, boots large and crudely made; and as for the hats, it seems to me that every man you meet wears a differently shaped one. A well-dressed man is unknown in Berlin. If you were to put up to auction the clothes of all the men you meet on a Sunday in the Linden, I am sure that they would not average twenty marks apiece. My good fellow, do not try and teach me how to dress, for I flatter myself that I have studied the matter seriously, and not without some success. I sincerely hope, however, that you are not going as you are."

"I certainly shall," replied the Count, who was dressed in a shooting suit and a felt hat, and whose trousers and boots were covered with the dust accumulated during a long walk. "I am going to challenge Colonel von Bergmann, and I cannot see that it will very much matter to him in what costume I do it."

Having inquired of the hotel porter the address of the Colonel, and having obtained the necessary information, Count Klinkenstein started, with the Baron, in quest of his adversary. As they neared the house the Count began to walk slower and slower, and when the Baron made a remark about it, he replied, "The whole business is so intensely foolish. What am I to tell the Colonel when I see him? I cannot begin by calling him out and expressing a wish to take his

life. I must first explain the whole story to him, and that is so very long. I do not know how I am to put it. I do not know what to say. I do not know what is to be done." With that the Count passed the house door, and began to walk to the end of the street.

"I think this is the house," remarked the Baron ; " shall I ring the bell ? "

"No, certainly not !" shouted the Count, in reply ; "I am not half ready with my speech ; I cannot find the words I want. What shall I do ! "

So they both walked up and down that street, passing and re-passing the Colonel's house several times, and considerably alarming the policeman on that beat, who kept watching them narrowly, unable to make out what they were up to. All of a sudden Count Klinkenstein started running for the house, and having reached it, he pulled the bell so violently that the connecting wire broke, and the knob remained in his hands.

" You are perfectly mad to behave like this !" gasped the little Baron, as he came up panting behind his friend.

" I cannot help it ; it had to be done. Now I am in for it, and, thank God, there is no escaping !" said Count Klinkenstein, as he heard the footsteps of a servant hurrying to open the door.

A servant in a smart livery appeared, and inquired what they wanted.

" What I want is your master," said the Count ; " and the sooner he shows himself the better. Where is he ? "

"I do not know," replied the servant ; "but I do not believe that he will receive you."

"Who asked you for your opinion?" roared Count Klinkenstein at the top of his voice. "Fetch your master out at once, for I am in the humour to-day to kill people."

"Then it will certainly be my duty to keep you out of the house," answered the servant, trying to shut the house door ; but Count Klinkenstein pushed him back, and rushing past, began mounting the staircase three steps at a time, in which feat of agility he was imitated by the little Baron. On reaching the landing he pushed open a door and found himself in a sitting-room. Colonel von Bergmann was seated at his writing-table, and as Count Klinkenstein rushed in, he turned round astonished and inquired what was the meaning of this intrusion. Now that Count Klinkenstein was face to face with the man he had come to challenge he found himself at a loss for words to express his purpose, and with difficulty muttered, "I presume you are Colonel von Bergmann?"

"I am the person you name," replied the Colonel, rising from his chair.

"Then I must present myself," replied the Count. "I am Count Klinkenstein, of Klinkenstein, in Saxony, and a sub-lieutenant in his Majesty's regiment of the Gardes du Corps."

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance," said the Colonel, with a good-humoured smile, and extending his hand.

Count Klinkenstein drew back, and there followed for a few moments a painful pause, until he began to

stammer out slowly, "I do not quite know how to say what I have come out to tell you. It is a very disagreeable business."

"Oh! if that is the case, by all means let us sit down; we shall be more comfortable seated than standing," said the Colonel, as he pointed to a chair, smiling, for he could not help feeling a little amused at the young officer's embarrassment. "Now let me hear the serious business which has brought you here."

"You have insulted my sister and myself, and I have come to call you out," exclaimed Count Klinkenstein with a sigh of relief.

"It is a case of calling out," remarked the Colonel; "then it is indeed a serious business which has brought you here. I suppose that young gentleman who has come along with you is to be one of your seconds? Pray introduce me to him, for you forgot to do so on entering."

"Baron Zerbino, Secretary of the Italian Embassy in Berlin," answered Count Klinkenstein, dryly, for he was beginning to get annoyed at the geniality of his adversary.

"Very glad to make your acquaintance," continued the Colonel; "gentlemen, can I offer you anything to drink?"

Count Klinkenstein declined; but the Baron, who felt warm after his walk up and down the street and his subsequent rapid ascent of the staircase, asked for a brandy-and-soda, which was soon brought to him.

"I suppose it is all settled now," said Count Klinkenstein, after a few moments of silence. "We shall probably have to fight to-morrow, for I have very little

time to spare ; and now I shall go and try and find another gentleman who may act with the Baron as my second, and they will settle matters of detail."

" You seem to be in a very great hurry to cross swords with me," replied the Colonel, laughing. " But pray, Count, what are we going to fight about ? "

" I thought you had understood, sir ; did I not tell you that you had insulted my sister and myself ? Is that not sufficient reason for calling you out ? "

" It certainly would be a sufficient cause," replied the Colonel ; " but at the present moment I have no recollection of my ever having done so."

" You do not remember ? " exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, astonished ; after which he began to explain all that had taken place two nights before at the Jockey Club.

" It now comes back to me," replied the Colonel. " A few months ago Captain von Hahn and Herr Nader were dining with me, and in the course of conversation one of them mentioned your father's name, and I remarked that your sister who is married had been left in bad circumstances. This was no doubt the case before you came of age. I am very glad, however, to hear that you have since settled some money on her, and I therefore beg to express to you my sincere regret that any remarks I may have made at a private dinner party respecting yourself and your family should have been repeated abroad by Count Immersdorf, and caused you pain. If it can give you any satisfaction, I will hand you a written apology, and I feel sure that the other gentlemen connected with me in this affair will willingly affix their names thereto."

Count Klinkenstein could not refuse this offer, but he was quite overcome with surprise that any one shold prefer to apologise to him than to fight a duel ; and it was with the greatest interest that he watched the Colonel seat himself at his desk and write out the following apology,—

“ We, the undersigned, having on an occasion talked about Count Klinkenstein’s family, and spoken disparagingly about his conduct towards his sister, do hereby acknowledge that we were mistaken in our remarks, and we consequently retract all we may have said, and fully apologise for any annoyance which we may have caused him.”

At the bottom of the page the Colonel placed his signature and the date.

“ I will obtain the signatures of the other gentlemen at once,” said the Colonel, laying down his pen ; “ and I will then send you the document to your hotel. You will get it in a couple of hours. By the way, when do you return to Berlin ? ”

“ To-morrow morning,” replied Count Klinkenstein, shaking his adversary’s hand, now that everything was settled.

“ Then do me the pleasure of both dining here to-night. I shall try and get the two other persons you wished to challenge to come also. I admire you, Count Klinkenstein, for having come all the way to fight a duel about statements which had been made respecting your sister. You are young, and it is right that you should be brave and not fear to call men out when you think you have been insulted by them. When you will get to be of my age, and have persons dependent

upon you, you will think twice before you risk your life."

The Colonel's invitation having been accepted, Count Klinkenstein and the Baron left the house.

"I told you it would end like this," remarked the Baron, directly the house door had been closed behind them. "The man would have been a fool if he had not apologised."

"You may think so, perhaps," replied the Count; "but for my part had I been in the Colonel's place, and a young fellow had burst into my room and proceeded to challenge me, apparently without cause, I would have kicked him out of the house and so certainly have brought about a duel. I cannot tell you, my dear Zerbino, what a relief it is to me that this business has been settled. It has been like a nightmare to me."

Then the Count, taking the Baron's arm, strolled back to his hotel, laughing and singing aloud, and amusing himself by chaffing the policemen he met and making love to the nursery maids. He was in high spirits, and on reaching the hotel he ordered a big luncheon and had champagne bottles put in ice, for he meant to have a high time of it. While luncheon was being prepared he went upstairs to change his dress, for though he thought it good enough to challenge a man in, it no longer seemed suitable in his eyes for sitting down to lunch with the spick and span little Baron. While dressing he discharged out of his window all the ammunition he had brought with him for his pistols. It caused a great alarm in the hotel, and an excited chambermaid, rushing into his room to

ascertain the cause of the firing, had her alarm further increased by catching sight of the Count's person with very little clothing on.

During luncheon Count Klinkenstein received the precious document, duly signed with the three names, which thus put an end to all idea of his having to fight any duels. Having drunk much champagne and sat a long time over their coffee and cigars, they ordered a carriage and took a drive. That evening they dined with the Colonel and his friends, and the party did not break up till late in the night.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY the next day Count Klinkenstein and Baron Zerbino left Baden-Baden on their return journey to Berlin. The Count was still in very high spirits, and with difficulty could be kept in order by his friend. Whenever the train stopped at a station he would lean out of the window and chaff the passengers on the platform and generally irritate the officials ; and one railway guard whose dignity he had offended was only soothed on receiving a handsome tip. Towards evening the train entered the station of Magdeburg, and as there was a quarter of an hour's stoppage here the Count got out and began pacing the platform, finding amusement in watching the passengers hurrying backwards and forwards searching for seats in the train, which happened to be very full. Suddenly his attention was drawn to a young girl who was evidently looking for a seat in the train, but who seemed unable to find one. She was alone ; her dress was simple, but there was nevertheless a certain air of smartness about her which could not fail to strike the most casual observer, and she was wearing a delightful little bonnet which suited her admirably. There was something about her appearance and her manners which was undeniably fascinating, and Count Klinkenstein remarked as she turned round that her hair was brown and her

eyes dark. She was very self-possessed, though without a trace of effrontery, and she seemed very different from the ordinary German maiden with her dowdy appearance and fair hair plaited into the regulation two tresses down her back.

The more the Count looked at her the more did he get interested, and he followed her about the platform trying not to let her notice that he was doing so. The train was on the point of starting when the guard, who had been much worried finding seats for all the passengers, came up to her and said rather roughly, "Now, Fräulein, do you wish to be left behind? If not, look alive and jump in; there is room for you here." With that he tried to push her into a third-class compartment in which there were already several rough-looking individuals who began making coarse jokes at the prospect of having so fair a travelling companion. Count Klinkenstein immediately rushed forward and, taking off his hat to the young girl, offered her a seat in his carriage. She readily accepted it, and the Count had but just time to send for another first-class ticket and to help her in before the train began steaming out of the station.

"May I ask your name, Fräulein?" said the Count, in his sweetest manner.

"Olga Zanelli," she replied; "my grandfather originally came from Venice, but he settled in Berlin many years ago with his family, and I was born in that city."

"And you are going back to Berlin?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is delightful," added the Count; "then we

shall have your company all the way. But are you not afraid of travelling like this all by yourself?"

"No," she replied, without hesitation; "I am sure no one would willingly do me any harm, and I am not sufficiently well off to fear that I may be robbed."

"When a girl has as pretty a face as hers one need not go very far to fall into dangers," remarked Baron Zerbino in French. She evidently understood what he had said, for she blushed and turned her face away, and looking out of the window watched for a time the sun setting in the sandy plain of Brandenburg.

"Are you going back to your friends in Berlin?" inquired Count Klinkenstein after a pause, for he felt a strong desire to find out something more regarding his fair travelling companion. She did not answer at first, then, turning her face towards him, she replied in the sweetest voice imaginable, "I have no friends."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Count Klinkenstein. "What are you doing in Berlin all alone? Have you really got no friends, no relations, no one to look after you?"

"I am a milliner's assistant, sir; they pay me well enough, because they say that I have more taste than the others. I look after the shop generally, and live with my mistress. I have neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister."

A thrill went through Count Klinkenstein as he thought he noticed moisture in her large dark eyes. "Do you like that kind of life?" he said, with a voice trembling slightly from fear that the question might hurt her feelings, for there was no man more delicate towards women, however low their station, than the

Count, and on this occasion he could not help feeling a strange sympathy for the lonely girl.

"I hate my present life," she replied, without any hesitation. "I hate everything about it ; its drudgery and the long hours of work ; I hate my companions, who have no ideas in their heads ; I hate my mistress, who thinks of nothing but making money ; I hate the very people who come to buy, and who never say a kind word to you, but who find fault with all you offer them, and who are supercilious and rude. I am trying to find some more congenial employment," she added, with a sigh ; "but there are so many disappointments in life that perhaps we are happier if we go through with our daily work listlessly and hope for nothing better."

"Have you been trying to find some employment in Magdeburg ?" inquired the Count, taking more and more interest in her.

"Yes," she replied ; "I had heard that the manager of the theatre there wanted a young girl who could sing well enough to take a minor part in an operette. I presented myself to-day, but he would not take me. He said he had already made his choice."

"I am sorry you should have been disappointed," said the Count ; "was your voice not good enough ?"

"The manager told me that my voice and my appearance were both in my favour, but that a girl who had no money would not get on, as she would be unable to stand the expense of being well dressed on the stage. The girl he had chosen was protected by a well-to-do officer of the Magdeburg garrison."

"Do you care very much about the theatre?" inquired Count Klinkenstein.

"I am passionately fond of it," she replied; "as a child I used to dance at the Victoria Theatre,—that was when my father led the orchestra at that house, but after his death my mother took me away; she was German, and always hated the idea of my appearing before the public; she thought that it was not respectable. We were poor, so I had to take to milliner's work."

"Were you ever taught to sing?" inquired the Count.

"My father used to give me lessons; he taught me many an Italian song which I sometimes still sing at my work. He always talked to me in Italian; but now that he is dead I never hear that language spoken."

"Do sing us something," said Count Klinkenstein and Baron Zerbino at the same time, and they pressed her so that she yielded at last and gave them Tuscan peasant songs with a voice so soft and sweet that the passengers in the other compartments of the train leant out of the windows to listen to her, and Count Klinkenstein, lying back in a corner of the carriage, closed his eyes and dreamed himself back to the days of his boyhood in Florence, when on autumn afternoons he remembered hearing the peasants singing such songs as they gathered the grapes on the hill slopes of Fiesole.

So the time passed, and they were astonished when they found themselves entering the Berlin station brilliant with its electric light. Count Klinkenstein

handed Olga Zanelli out of the carriage, and asked her if she would like to have supper with him and the Baron. She declined with many thanks, and as he saw that she did not wish to come he made no further attempts to press her, though he would have given a good deal to have had the pleasure of her company. Offering her his arm he threaded his way through the crowded station, and he said to her as they walked along, "Give me your address, for it would be too cruel not to let me see you again." She gave it him, and the Count then hailed a cab and helped his fair companion into it. He paid the fare in advance, and bade the coachman drive to the address she had just given him. As she drove away the Count raised his hat, and remained standing on the steps of the station following the cab with his eyes until it turned round a corner and was lost to sight.

"I believe you are in love," said the Baron, who had been searching for his friend among the crowd, and who found him at last standing outside the station. "Klinkenstein, do you mean to say that you have let her go?"

"She would not stay," he replied. "I wish she had remained, for she has left an impression on me which, so far, no other girl has done."

"Beware of Italian girls, my dear Klinkenstein ; you do not know what they are. If they love, they give themselves up body and soul to the man ; but if you deceive them they become perfect fiends, and you are in imminent danger of losing your life. Stick to your German maidens, my dear fellow ; their affections are easily won. Give your Gretchen

sufficient to eat and to drink in the shape of beer and sausages, throw in an occasional kiss or other token of regard, especially in public places, and she will be perfectly happy. Should you get tired of her and leave her, she will, no doubt, shed tears at first, but she will soon find some one else who will console her for your loss. She is a sensible creature, and her affections adapt themselves to the situation. The Italian girl yearns for love ; the German maiden is satisfied if she is spooned.” Having delivered himself of these wise remarks, the little Baron began humming aloud the air out of the *Traviata*, “O misterioso amore.”

“It is all very fine to talk like that,” replied the Count ; “but we are not able to pick and choose in matters of love. We are in the hands of Fate, and we know not into whose arms we may be thrown.” Looking up at the illuminated clock of the station, he added, “It is nearly ten o’clock ; let us go and have something to eat, for I feel very hungry.”

“By all means,” replied Zerbino, taking his friend’s arm, and then they walked up the Wilhelmstrasse, and at the corner of the Unter den Linden entered the well-known Restaurant des Ambassadeurs kept by a Frenchman.

There are three things for which France has a European reputation : military men of foolhardy bravery, cooks of the highest quality, and demimondaines with a genius for spending money. Now Monsieur Lechef was a fine specimen of the second category, and had come to Berlin as cook in the

suite of a French ambassador. He was not slow to see that a restaurant where superior cooking could be found would soon attract to itself the aristocracy of the place, the young officers, and the foreign diplomatists. He therefore hired rooms in a central position, and his expectations were not slow to be realised, for very soon it became difficult to find an empty table in his restaurant at dinner or luncheon-time. Monsieur Lechef was a man of domestic habits, so he never encouraged his restaurant being turned into a night house. At ten o'clock the place was nearly always empty, and if he had no customers by eleven he would close his doors and retire to the society of his wife, who every night had to listen to violent tirades against everything German, and to endless laments that he was compelled to live in this *sacré pays*, together with expressions of longing on his part for the time when he would be able to return to France with his pockets full of German gold. During the daytime, however, Monsieur Lechef put aside all signs of blatant and noisy patriotism, and in talking to his guests he would eschew politics as he would garlic in his food ; he never failed to illuminate his restaurant on the Emperor's birthday, and he would even go to the expense of having a flaming gas star over the entrance ; nor did he forget on the birthdays of even the most insignificant prince of the royal family to hang out a profusion of German and Prussian flags from his windows. So Monsieur Lechef was looked upon by the authorities as an inoffensive person, and dukes and princes and old generals who had led victorious armies into France

would patronise his establishment and talk to him condescendingly.

The only person in the restaurant when Count Klinkenstein and the Baron entered it was Sydney Gray, one of the secretaries at the British Embassy. He had been in the country for the day and had just returned, which accounted for the late hour at which he was dining. As they all knew each other, the Count and the Baron took seats at his table.

"What have you been doing during these last few days? I have not seen you about anywhere," said Sydney Gray.

"I am just back from Baden-Baden, where I have been settling a matter of honour."

"You do not mean to say that you have been *ass* enough to fight a duel?" exclaimed Sydney Gray.

"Do not be alarmed," replied Count Klinkenstein; "it's all well that ends well. I meant to fight, but they apologised, so there was no duel," and he triumphantly flourished in the air the document with the three signatures.

"It only shows that they were persons of great common sense," remarked the Englishman.

"I quite agree with you; I confess that I am very glad they had enough moral courage to apologise, or by this time I would probably be dead. I do not think I am more of a coward than other men, but I can assure you I will never forget the miserable time I passed through while this duel was hanging over me. I do not think I shall challenge any one else in a hurry." Then the Count began drumming upon the glasses with his knife to rouse the sleepy

waiters, and he sent a message to Monsieur Lechef to tell him to prepare a first-class supper, and he ordered champagne to be brought and to be put in ice.

" You seem to be in very high spirits to-night," remarked Sydney Gray.

" Klinkenstein is in love!" shrieked the little Baron, pitching his voice in its shrillest notes, and jumping about on his chair; " he is in love; madly in love. I believe we shall see him married in a month."

" How did all this come about?" inquired Sydney Gray; " and who can be the fascinating syren who has brought about this change in so short a space of time?"

Then Count Klinkenstein related how he had made the acquaintance of Olga Zanelli in the train, what an impression she had made on him, and that he had resolved to see her again as soon as possible. Taking a glass of champagne he emptied it, drinking a toast to her.

" We shall have to look after you, my dear Klinkenstein," remarked Sydney Gray, " or you will certainly be committing some folly."

" I am sure he will if he sees her again," echoed the Baron; " he has no experience of the ways of women, and will believe all the nonsense they tell him. This Olga Zanelli has every possible defect. She is a regular Bohemian, that is evident; she is sufficiently pretty for Klinkenstein to fall in love with her; she seems clever, therefore she will squeeze all the money she can out of him; then she is an

Italian, and to have a liaison with a native of my country is like going straight to hell, for she will most assuredly ruin your career, and make your life miserable if you do not marry her. Why the deuce do you want to fall in love, my dear Klinkenstein? Are there not amusements enough to be found in Berlin without that? Do not think about her any more; a liaison with a person of her position in life has all the disadvantages of marriage without any of its compensations."

"Zerbino exaggerates everything to-night," said Count Klinkenstein, feeling rather annoyed. "Why must one suppose that I am seriously in love with a girl because I say I find her more interesting and original than any other I have hitherto met? I am a free agent; I can do as I please with mine own; and I have sufficient money to throw away upon whatever gives me pleasure. I have promised Olga that I would see her again; I will not disappoint her; besides, what harm can she do me?"

"That is not the only question which you should consider, my dear Klinkenstein," remarked Sydney Gray; "is there not also the possibility of your doing her harm? You say the girl is poor and discontented with her lot; you are young and rich; you will sympathise with her and be kind to her. It seems to me more than probable that she will fall in love with you, just as you will, probably, fall in love with her. I take it for granted that you have no intention of marrying her; well, then, remember that the time will come when you will grow tired of her, and will want to separate from her; what will become of her

then? You will have ruined her life and made her miserable. Take my advice, and do not go and see her again. No good can come of it, and probably a great deal of harm. Avoid falling in love until you mean to marry, and then I hope it will be with some one of your own position in life."

" You seem to be in a very moral mood to-night," replied Count Klinkenstein. " Pray let us have no sermons, we are too young for that sort of thing ; let us rather eat, drink, and be merry while we may, for who can tell what may be in store for us ? " Then he raised his glass and drank a toast to woman, without whom life would be a blank. From women the conversation rolled to other subjects, and it was past midnight before the convivial party broke up, and Count Klinkenstein retired to bed to dream of Olga Zanelli.

CHAPTER VI.

GIACOMO ZANELLI was born in Venice of unknown parents, and had been reared in a foundling's hospital. He began life early as a chorister in one of the parish churches, but later, on account of the excellence of his voice, he was removed to the choir of St. Mark's, where he remained for many years. His superiors wished him to take the lower orders of the priesthood, and were willing to send him to a seminary to be trained, but he absolutely refused to accede to this suggestion, and when the pressure brought to bear upon him became too great he ran away and joined a band of strolling players. For several years he travelled about with them, stopping to perform in the different small capitals of the innumerable Italian principalities which existed at that time, and perfecting himself in the art of singing as best as he could. On his return to Venice he was lucky enough to obtain an engagement in the chorus at the Fenice Opera-houſe. His tenor voice was too good to remain long unnoticed, so he was allowed to try minor *rôles*, and, acquitting himself of them to the general satisfaction, he grew in public favour, and was eventually allowed to sing the second tenor part in great operas. Higher than that he never rose in his profession.

Giacomo Zanelli was an ardent patriot, and when the revolution of 1848 broke out he immediately took up arms against the Austrian yoke, and during the long siege of his native city he held a conspicuous position, and was personally commended by Garibaldi for his coolness and bravery in danger. The crash came, and the city had to surrender ; then Giacomo fled, taking with him his young son Pietro, for the privations endured during the siege had killed his wife. In a fisherman's boat he crossed the lagoons, and landing at an uninhabited spot on the coast, walked from thence with his boy across Venetia, hiding with the help of the peasants, travelling at night and undergoing many and great hardships. By good fortune he was able to elude the Austrian soldiers who were on the look-out for fugitives, and, crossing the Swiss frontier near the Lake of Garda, he fell down on his knees and thanked God for His mercy that he had been spared from ending his days in the prison fortress of Spielberg. He was now absolutely destitute, and had not a compatriot of his taken pity on him and presented him with a guitar he would have been in a bad way. By means of this instrument he succeeded in earning a livelihood by accompanying himself on it as he sang in the streets or in hotels, and he not unfrequently wrung a gold coin from some Englishman for the spirited way in which he sang Garibaldi's hymn. Thus he worked his way through Switzerland and Germany, and eventually settled in Berlin, which was then little more than a provincial town ; here his compatriots helped him to eke out a precarious existence by procuring him pupils to whom he gave musical

lessons. The old man lived long enough to hear of the liberation of Venetia and of the victory of Prussia over Austria. On that day he rose from his bed, to which he had been kept for several days by sickness, and, having dressed himself in his best as if for a feast-day, he took his son's arm and, so supported, went to his favourite beer garden. Having called for a glass of that liquor, he solemnly drank a toast to the now nearly united kingdom of Italy and perdition to the house of Austria, which had caused his country so much woe. Having discharged what he considered to be his duty he returned home, and, laying himself again to bed, died in a few days, at peace with all men.

Pietro Zanelli's musical education had been carefully attended to by his father, and at an early age he had obtained an engagement as a violinist in the orchestra of the opera-house. He was a good-natured, good-humoured, careless creature, reckless with his money when he had any, and with a considerable talent for music and for arranging *pot-pourris* which had gained a considerable popularity in the more insignificant theatres of Berlin. A few years before his father's death he fell in love with a German lady, the daughter of a tradesman in a small way, and married her. It cannot be said that it was a well-assorted match. She was good-looking enough in a certain way, but decidedly coarse and vulgar. It is difficult to explain such unions ; perhaps the young Italian, full of nerves and of an excitable temperament, felt attracted towards the stolid qualities of his wife, who, with her fleshiness and florid complexion, rather resembled the type of beauty which Rubens so loved to paint. In

temperament she was cold and unsympathetic, caring little for her husband's artistic aspirations, and looking upon his music merely as the means of gaining an income ; nor did he get any peace so long as he had an hour in the day unoccupied in giving a lesson. But, with her many faults, she was a good housekeeper : looking well after the servants ; working herself like a slave ; making money go as far as possible ; and priding herself that on their small income she managed to give her husband every reasonable comfort ; for she belonged to that large class of persons who place the satisfaction of the material wants above those of the spiritual aspirations. Many a time did the poor man escape from the oppressiveness of his home to find relief in spending a day by himself in the forests of pine and fir which surround Berlin.

One child was born of the marriage, and she was christened Olga. Pietro would have liked to have given her an Italian name to remind her of her fatherland, which she would probably never see, but his stern wife informed him that a respected aunt had expressed a desire to be the godmother, and that to refuse would not be proper ; so there was nothing left for him to do but to aequiesce, but he soon changed the named of Olga, which he disliked, into Lolo, and as Lolo Zanelli the girl was ever afterwards known. Lolo grew up a remarkably intelligent child, and became the idol of her father ; she was little more than five years' old when Pietro Zanelli had the good fortune to be appointed conductor of the orchestra at the Victoria Theatre. He acquired thereby a certain position in the social world in which he moved, which

pleased his wife immensely, and it also gave him a secure though small income. Every night he would trudge on foot to this distant theatre, and it was a great source of joy to him, whenever he could wring from his wife the permission, to bring Lolo along with him. Carrying the child in his arms most of the way, he would, on these occasions, extend his walk, passing down the Unter den Linden to point out to her the palaces of the Emperor and of the princes, and to see her delight at the numerous and varied uniforms of the officers and soldiers they met. Chattering all the way to the child in Italian, he would reach the theatre in better humour than he generally did, and Lolo would immediately be given a seat in the orchestra, for she was a great favourite among the musicians, and was never known to grow troublesome or to create a disturbance. During the entr'actes she would be allowed to explore for herself the mysteries of the big drum, and even to finger the strings of the violins. So Lolo grew up to be a perfect little Bohemian, caring not a jot for household duties, but loving to be with her father, and to sit by his side, and to learn those Italian songs which he was so fond of singing to her. On Sundays and holidays in summer, when the weather was fine and there was enough cash to be found, the Zanelli family would take third-class tickets, and go by train to one of the innumerable beer gardens in the vicinity of Berlin. Then Pietro would leave his wife seated at a table to enjoy herself sipping weak coffee and gossiping to her neighbours, while she occupied herself knitting or mending the household linen, and, taking Lolo along with him to romp and play in the

forest, he would retire far from the sound of clinking beer-glasses and the monotonous roll of the bowls in the skittle alley.

The ballet-master of the Victoria Theatre had taken a fancy to Lolo, and offered to give her lessons of dancing free of charge. Pietro accepted the offer with pleasure, for the child seemed delighted at the idea to learn how to dance; but he took care not to tell his wife about it, for she would certainly have been opposed to the plan. Lolo was thus initiated at an early age into the intricacies of ballet dancing and of pirouetting on the tips of her toes. When she was little more than fourteen years of age the director of the theatre offered to let her dance a *pas-seul* in a new extravaganza he was bringing out. The day Pietro announced this news to his wife there was a scene in the Zanelli household. She stubbornly refused to allow her daughter to appear on the stage, and it required all the coaxing of Lolo and all the persuasive arts of Pietro, who pointed out that he would be every night at the theatre to watch over the child, and that the director had even offered to pay two pounds a week for her services, and promised even more if she proved a success, before a reluctant consent was wrung out of the afflicted mother.

Never had Lolo been so happy or so excited as during the few weeks which intervened before her appearance on the stage of the Victoria Theatre, when every day for several hours she had to be drilled into the work which was expected of her. The eventful day came at last, and Lolo went down to the theatre with a beating heart. Her father had attired himself for

this occasion in his best coat, and he was wearing a large and immaculate white tie, but nothing would induce his wife to accompany him, for she declined to witness what she considered the degradation of her child. With a trembling hand Pietro Zanelli directed the orchestra on that night, and when Lolo appeared in her white gauze skirts and her silken tights and satin shoes, it was as much as he could manage to keep his eyes on the music before him and to pay attention to what he was doing.

Lolo had much in her favour ; she was young and pretty, the public saw at a glance that she was fond of her art, and that night she danced with such grace and skill that she took the house by storm, and the applause being repeated over and over again there was nothing left for Lolo to do but to go a second time through her performance. A lady in a box, feeling sympathy for the young child, threw her a bouquet, not one of those elaborate and costly things which contain diamonds and *billet-doux*, but a simple one of flowers which the lady had been wearing as an ornament. With a feeling of immense thankfulness to the unknown person who had thus noticed her, Lolo picked up the bouquet and retired with a bow. She afterwards dried the flowers and kept them always by her as a talisman. It is not unfrequently the case that a spontaneous act on our part entailing but little cost to ourselves becomes a source of infinite joy unto others.

The performance over, Pietro Zanelli hurried to his daughter, and shedding many tears of joy kissed her over and over again. Then father and daughter

walked homewards arm in arm, he giving vent to his feelings by gesticulating wildly, so that the people they met in the streets would turn round astonished and look at the enthusiastic Italian with his black flowing locks. It was a warm summer's night in June, and when they reached the bridge over the Spree, on which the equestrian statue of the Great Elector has been erected, they sat down at its base to rest awhile.

"One makes a *début* but once in one's life," said Pietro Zanelli ; "it should always be remembered as a solemn moment, and be graven on the memory for ever. I have got money to-night, Lolo ; come with me, and we shall celebrate this day worthily."

So they entered a restaurant which was near, and Pietro ordered a substantial supper with a bottle of champagne decorated round the cork with some glittering gold paper, and seating himself near an open window, from which he overlooked the great place in front of the palace lit up with its innumerable lights, he began building castles in the air with regard to Lolo's future career, telling her how she would acquire a great reputation and perform in all the capitals of Europe, be feted by the rich and great, and perhaps make enough money to be able to retire like Taglioni to a palace in Venice. Happy man that he could not read the stars and know how it was all to end.

In after years, when Lolo was dining in many a luxuriant restaurant, her thoughts would wander back with pleasure to the night she supped with her father in the mean hostelry of the Golden Lamb. It was late when they broke up, and then without speaking

much to each other they walked slowly homewards hand in hand, for they were both in that happy emotional state when it is best to be silent. Lolo retired to bed tired and happy and pleased with the world, and not even the scolding her mother gave her for being out so late could cast a cloud upon the future which seemed to open out to her in such golden colours.

Johann Lazarus was the brother of Pietro Zanelli's wife. As a boy he had been sent to the "Gymnasium," where he distinguished himself more by his application to his books than by his real cleverness. From school he proceeded to the University, and after passing the required time there and taking his degree, he was ordained in the Lutheran Church. He then married an insignificant wife, and became the father of a considerable family, over whom he tyrannized, as was only right and proper in a person who united in himself the double authority of a father and a pastor in the Christian Church. Physically Johann Lazarus was not remarkable, for he was thin, and weakly in health ; he had become prematurely bald, and he was so short-sighted that he was never seen without his spectacles. Intellectually he was a narrow-minded pedant, with an immense opinion of himself. It is true, however, that he had acquired a certain reputation for learning, for he was no doubt proficient in Hebrew, and had written a pamphlet on the derivation of a certain word which had given rise to a controversy, and created quite a commotion in the little world of the professors. In politics he was an ultra-Conservative ; in his opinion the world was divided by Divine law into two halves ; the guiding portion, which consisted of the nobility and

the priesthood, and the working portion, which comprised all those whose duty it was to toil and to spin to satisfy the wants of humanity. Any one who did not fit into one of these two categories he looked upon as a monstrosity, a pariah, and an accursed thing, who ought to be suppressed by every Christian government. Nothing could exceed his cringing servility to the great, or the overbearing insolence of his manner to tradesmen and servants, and other such low persons. As he was strictly Orthodox in his views, and never lost an opportunity of expressing his loyalty to the throne, he was placed at an early age at the head of one of the cadet schools of the empire, for into his hands it was thought the education of youth could be safely intrusted. He did not belie the expectations which had been formed of him ; he kept the school under strict discipline, and every Sunday he would mount into the pulpit and deliver himself of a sermon in which he held up the military profession to his young auditory as the one most approaching to the Christian ideal, and he inculcated on them the duty of obedience and loyalty to the reigning house ; nor did he ever make allusion to his Majesty the Emperor save in terms which have been usually applied only to the Deity. So he had not long to wait before his wishes were fulfilled, and he was brought into actual contact with royalty by being appointed a court chaplain. A few years later he ingratiated himself still more into the good graces of the court by accepting the difficult task of delivering the funeral oration on a prince, whose life it was publicly known had been far from reputable. He acquitted himself of this duty with great ingenuity, for he boldly

held up the life of the deceased prince as an example of what the Christian life should be. Such devoted loyalty to the throne could not be passed over unrecognised, so Johann Lazarus received a few days later a letter from the minister of public worship, informing him that it had pleased his Majesty, in consideration of his great learning, piety, and Christian charity, to confer upon him the decoration of the Red Eagle of the fourth class.

The marriage of his sister to Pietro Zanelli was a sore point with Johann Lazarus. He occasionally condescended to see his sister, but nothing would induce him to recognise his brother-in-law, whom he looked upon as an alien, a Bohemian, the son of a conspirator, and a member of a heretical faith; for though Pietro was far from being a bigot, and was certainly not very attentive to the services of his Church, yet he was born and bred a Roman Catholic, and he had no intention of changing his religion to please a pedantic theologian with whom he happened to be connected by marriage. The two families, therefore, did not see much of each other. Johann Lazarus had many children, but it is only necessary to speak of one of them, whose name was Heinrich. He was born a few years before his cousin Olga Zanelli. He differed very much from his brothers, who were strong, burly fellows, and rather resembled his father in being physically weak ; but in tastes he differed entirely from him, for though Heinrich was destined for the Church he hated the prospect of such a profession cordially ; at school he was always getting into trouble, and the parental wrath had continually to manifest itself in the shape of a

good hiding. It was not unnatural, therefore, that Heinrich hated his home and the good conversation that was habitual there, and his blood would boil when he had to listen in silence to the loyal effusions of his father ; he became at heart a republican and a discontented spirit, and many a time he would run over to the Zanelli household, where he was ever welcome, and where he breathed a freer air, and was at liberty to vent his feelings against things in general.

For two years Lolo danced on and off on the stage of the Victoria Theatre ; but one winter's night her father, trudging home on foot through the snow and against a biting east wind, caught a chill which developed into a fever, and he died. It was a terrible blow to her, for from her earliest youth she had been his constant companion. The household had now to be broken up, as there was not enough money left to keep it together. Lolo was removed from the stage and apprenticed to a milliner, and her mother went to live with her brother Johann Lazarus. There every day she felt she was becoming more and more of a burden to the already numerous family, and she had to listen daily to the reproaches of her brother that she had been foolish enough to throw away her life on a Bohemian, and had brought all this suffering on herself in consequence. However, she did not suffer long, for a year later she followed her husband to the grave, and was released from the pain and humiliation of feeling that she ate her daily bread only on sufferance. Lolo was little more than seventeen years old when she was left to fight her way through the world alone.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was yet early in the morning when Count Klin-kenstein tumbled into the rooms of Baron Zerbino and found him still in bed, and expressed surprise thereat.

"Do you expect me to be up at this early hour to receive you?" grumbled the Baron from under the bedclothes. "You seem to forget that I have been travelling all yesterday, and that our supper was not over till very late."

"I have been drilling my men for the last hour," answered the Count. "Give me some breakfast, Zerbino, for I feel very hungry."

"You may tell my man to bring you whatever you like," replied the Baron; "but please leave me in peace."

"I have no intention whatever of doing so, my dear fellow," replied the Count, laughing. "I want you to dress at once and to come with me. I am going to pay Olga Zanelli a visit, and I feel too shy to go alone."

"Confound your Olga Zanelli!" roared the Baron, turning his face to the wall; "have you not yet forgotten her?"

"By no means, I can never forget her; now be a good fellow, Zerbino, and get up quickly;" and the Count then began slowly to pull off the bedclothes.

"I suppose it is useless trying to sleep as long as

"you are here," said the Baron, sitting up in bed. "What on earth is the sense of wanting to go and see your new acquaintance at this hour of the morning? You will find all the shops still closed."

"Never mind about that," replied the Count; "we can wait outside till they are open."

"It seems to me a sufficiently ridiculous idea our going into a milliner's shop at all," said the Baron.

"That is the very reason I want you to come with me, Zerbino, for it will halve the ridicule attaching to each of us, and make it therefore easier to bear."

"Very well then," exclaimed the Baron, jumping out of bed and pushing his friend into the adjoining room; "let me at least dress in peace." Then he slammed his bedroom door and shouted to his servant to come and help him, and began his toilet.

Baron Zerbino's sitting-room was ornamented with a profusion of photographs of pretty women and actresses, and the portraits of such as according to his voluntary confession he had been more intimately connected with, were honoured with plush frames or were discreetly hidden behind silken curtains. The Baron posed as a great lady-killer, and it had become a habit with him to make love with all the ardour of a Southerner to every pretty girl or young married woman he came across. It was fortunate, however, for him that the ladies did not take him seriously, or he would not have remained long what he was, a happy bachelor. His real successes with women, so his friends would say, were rather of the kind which can be acquired by the means which threw the lovely Danae into the arms of Jove. It is a curious fact to

note that the good-natured little Baron always tried to make people believe that he was a cynic and a disbeliever in the virtue of women, and in order to keep up his character he was often led to act in a way which brought him into a ridiculous position, as on one occasion when he sent two pretty actresses of the same company invitations to supper couched in the same terms expressive of eternal devotion to them, forgetting that they would probably show each other their letters. That night the Baron had to eat his carefully prepared supper by himself and to submit to the chaff and sarcasm of his acquaintances.

While Count Klinkenstein was having breakfast he took down from the shelf one of Baron Zerbino's numerous books upon duelling, and became so absorbed in the subject that he had no idea that an hour had slipped by when the Baron came out of his bedroom dressed with his usual exaggerated smartness.

"Are you ready to start?" asked the Count, getting up and putting on the white cap of the Gardes du Corps.

"Do not be in such a dreadful hurry," growled the Baron, seating himself at the table and pouring out a cup of tea; "you have been troublesome enough this morning, for goodness' sake keep quiet now; go on reading, and let me have my breakfast in peace." Then he took an English newspaper and buried himself behind it. There followed a temporary silence, which was, however, not of long duration, for a knocking was soon heard at the door, and presently the servant entered the room bearing an enormous bouquet of evidently fresh-cut flowers.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the Baron with astonishment, as he peered over his newspaper.

"You need not be alarmed," replied the Count; "it is a little present for Olga Zanelli; I ordered it this morning when on my way to drill my men. It is quite freshly made. Does it not look nice? Do you think she will like it?"

"How should I know what her tastes are. I have no doubt, Klinkenstein, she is foolish enough to be pleased with such a present, for from my experience of the sex I should say they are always pleased when a man presents them with anything, however idiotic it may be, and for idiotcy your gift surpasses anything I have ever known. What should a milliner's assistant do with a huge bouquet? Does your over-heated imagination take her to be a duchess?"

"Duchess or no duchess, she is a delightfully pretty creature, and worthy of every token of respect," replied Count Klinkenstein, feeling rather annoyed at his friend's comments.

"Do you expect me to walk down the street carrying this token of your respect, regard, or affection?" inquired the Baron, taking up the huge bouquet and examining it with an amused look. "All hot-house flowers, too! What a waste of money! I am sure she would have preferred an embroidered petticoat or a pair of silk stockings to such a useless thing."

"Whoever gave a respectable girl underclothing as a present?"

"I have known it done not unfrequently," replied

the Baron, laughing, “ and with the very best results ; nor have I ever heard of a case in which such presents have been returned. Do you not know that there are plenty of countesses in Berlin who, having more rank than money, get their dressmakers’ bills paid by their admirers ? If the countesses do it, why should a milliner’s assistant be more squeamish ? You know my opinion with regard to the majority of the fair sex ; I have told it you a hundred times. In this world everything can be bought, and the only point about which there can be any difference of opinion is with regard to the price. Of course by the fair sex I do not mean the large number of hard-working women who are of interest only to their husbands, but the fair and frivolous butterflies who make the world tolerable by their beauty, and who, being butterflies, are naturally meant to be caught. Take my advice, my dear Klinkenstein, if you are bent upon winning a lady’s affections, you will find it an easier and a quicker course to make a judicious use of your wealth than to waste time delivering yourself with great difficulty of poetical effusions, or to send vans full of flowers to the object of your adoration. Thank God, that for one *femme exaltée* one meets with in this world there are at least twenty who are pretty and practical ! ”

“ You are absolutely devoid of poetry,” replied Count Klinkenstein, in very bad humour ; “ you never take anything seriously, and you judge everything from a crass point of view.”

“ Devoid of poetry ! ” exclaimed the Baron, sending his voice up into a high note ; “ I see further than

you do, that is all. There is infinitely more poetry in a silk stocking, than in all this tomfoolery of big bouquets. My dear fellow, I have known silk stockings with more brilliant colours and with a sweeter scent than all your cut flowers which fade at once and lose their smell."

"When you have quite done giving me proofs of your sense of poetry you will perhaps accompany me to the person who is poetry itself," said Count Klinkenstein, taking up his big bouquet and preparing to leave the room.

"Now do not be foolish, Klinkenstein ; do you wish to have all the street boys running after you ? Let my servant go ahead and carry that ridiculous thing to your Fräulein Olga Zanelli ; we shall meanwhile take a stroll and give her time to digest the meaning of such an original and stupendous present from a nameless admirer."

With some reluctance Count Klinkenstein consented, and the Baron's servant was put in charge of the big bouquet and sent about his errand, while the two friends took a stroll down the only walk in Berlin, the Unter den Linden. At every shop window the Baron, who was a regular *flâneur*, would stop and admire the contents, which he must have known by heart for they were so rarely changed ; with ill-disguised ill-humour Count Klinkenstein would turn back to drag his friend away from his contemplations, and make him arrive quicker at their goal.

The milliner's shop they were in quest of was in the Leipzigerstrasse. As they approached it the Count's heart beat so high that for several minutes

he was in too nervous a state to go in, and he remained contemplating the bonnets from outside.

"Can you see, Zerbino, whether she is inside?" inquired Count Klinkenstein, after a long pause.

The little Baron was standing on the doorsteps of the shop, whistling a tune, and making his cane whirl round at an alarming rate while occupying himself with staring at every pretty woman who passed by. "How the deuce should I be able to see through ground-glass!" he muttered, in reply. "In my life I never knew any one so ridiculously shy of a girl as you are. If you wish to talk to her and to tell her the immensity of your devotion to her, by all means let us go in and get it over; there is no use standing outside looking at the bonnets." Having said this he pushed open the door, and the sharp ring of a bell which it occasioned sent a thrill through the Count, who was now forced to follow his friend into the shop. Olga Zanelli was not there, but an elderly lady rose and asked them what they wanted.

"Show me some bonnets," said the Baron, unabashed, and taking a seat.

"Gentlemen, what style do you like?" inquired the shop-woman.

"Any style you like," answered Count Klinkenstein, stamping with his feet, and making as much noise as he could with his sword, for he felt very irritated at not finding Olga Zanelli in the shop.

"Oh! any style I like," said the elderly dame, looking at her customers for a time through her spectacles. "I presume, however, that you want the

bonnet for a young person?" she added, laying a particular stress on the word young.

"You are quite right," replied the Baron, sharply. "We do not usually buy bonnets for our grandmothers."

The elderly shop-woman said no more, but proceeded to open her cupboards, and to expose upon the counter a series of bonnets and hats in the newest fashions.

"They are pretty enough," said the Baron, examining them critically. "But I cannot judge of their effect by merely seeing them stretched on their wooden frames. Have you got no young person on whom we might try them?"

"Olga!" shouted the shop-woman, "come and try some bonnets."

At the sound of that name Count Klinkenstein started up from his reverie, and he could not restrain a deep blush on seeing Olga Zanelli walk in from an adjoining room.

"How do you do?" she said, in that soft sweet voice of hers, as soon as she recognised her two travelling companions of the previous day. "I have just received a splendid bouquet," she whispered to the Count, as she passed him. "I suppose it comes from you, as I know of no one else who would have sent me one. I thank you very much for it," she added, after a moment's pause, during which her thoughts wandered back to the day of her *début* on the stage when an unknown lady had thrown her a handful of flowers.

The sincerity of her tone when she thanked him

gave Count Klinkenstein a start, and all the ridicule which his friend had heaped upon his flowers was forgotten in the pleasure which her appreciation of them caused him.

"Which of these bonnets shall the young person try?" inquired the old lady, eyeing her treasures with evident pride.

"Try them all on one after the other," replied the Baron. "That will give us more time to contemplate the beauty of nature and of art."

So Olga Zanelli was made to put on several hats and bonnets in succession, in every one of which she seemed charming. Count Klinkenstein was too agitated to say much, but he kept his eyes continually fixed upon the girl, who was well worth admiring with her splendid figure and strange fascinating face, with its dark, pathetic eyes. After much delay a bonnet was eventually selected and paid for, and instructions were given that it should be sent home. That same afternoon Count Klinkenstein sent it back addressed to Olga Zanelli, together with a letter delicately worded, in which he expressed a hope that she would accept it; and as she had told him that she was fond of going to the play, he begged at the same time to inclose several theatre tickets for her use.

Count Klinkenstein did not like to show himself in a theatre with Olga Zanelli, so on days when he sent her tickets he would never fail to be at the door of the house when the performance was over in order to escort her home. She always declined to have supper with him, and the Count never pressed

her very much, for he was afraid of hurting her feelings, and, moreover, he felt a certain strange shyness and reserve in her presence which was not usual to him with other girls. There was no doubt that she felt attracted towards him, as was only natural, for he was young, rich, and handsome, and the bearer of a proud uniform ; nor had any man so far shown such devotion to her, or been so delicate in his attentions. Their feelings now might be compared to the water of two streams, each flowing in its own bed, silently and limpidly along towards each other, and meeting eventually to form a river whose waters are destined to be cast into the storm of the ocean.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was late at night, and the rain was coming down steadily. That long street, the Friedrichstrasse, seemed deserted; only a few miserable women still occupied the pavement, walking fast up and down to keep themselves warm, and still clinging to the hope that some passer-by might take pity upon them, and not let them go supperless to bed. Here and there beneath the shadow of a door-post might be seen a crouching figure; and whenever a belated individual hurried past it would come forward and offer a flower in tones so pathetic and genuine that whoever heard them would shiver at the thought that such starvation and abject misery could exist in the great city. Importunity there was none, for not far off, in the glimmer from a gas lantern, shone the military helmet of the policeman, and beggary is forbidden, and revolting poverty is carefully driven beneath the surface, as is only proper in a city which is the capital of a great empire. A few vendors of fruit still called out their wares, and here and there might be seen the barrow of a seller of hot coffee, lighted by a solitary candle, the flame of which fluttered to and fro in the wind, and was occasionally extinguished by the drizzling rain. Some wretched creatures stood around, haggling

with the owner for a hot drink at a lower price than he felt inclined to take. Wrapped in his thick cloak, and indifferent to the weather, the night watchman would pass, clinking his keys and making his boots creak, and when he reached the corner of a street he would stop a moment to gossip with his colleague the policeman.

Two seedily dressed individuals, wrapped in cloaks which were much the worse for wear, came down the street together.

"It is a wretched night," remarked one of them, "and it is a long way to our usual beer-house."

"I have enough money to pay for a few mugsful of beer; it seems to me best that we should go in here," replied the other, halting at the door of a café illuminated by the electric light, as could be seen by the brilliant rays which shot through the chinks in the shutters.

"By all means," answered the first speaker; "but you know the state of my purse: I am stranded for the moment."

"Never mind," replied the other, "I have enough for two."

The porter, who was standing at the door, and who had been watching them, pushed back the heavy curtain and let them in. They found themselves in a large room brilliantly lighted and crowded with men and women sitting round little tables. The atmosphere was so thick with smoke that it was difficult to distinguish people at the further end of the room; a sickly smell of stale tobacco and beer pervaded the place. There was much noise and talking going on,

and now and again one could hear the loud vulgar shouts of some painted female. The two individuals who had just come in threaded their way between the numerous small tables and sat down in a corner at the furthest end of the room, where they were less surrounded by other people. A waiter at once brought them two frothy mugs of beer.

"So things are going badly with you," said Heinrich Schultze, one of the individuals who had just sat down. He was a thick brawny man of large size, with a low forehead and a disagreeable expression.

"Very badly indeed," replied his comrade, whose name was Gaspar Metzler. He was a small man with an intelligent face, and from his appearance one would have said that he had gypsy blood in his veins. "Things are going very badly indeed with me," he continued, taking a long pull at his beer ; "I have just been let out of prison, and of course no one will have me as his servant. If I try to do anything I am worried by the police ; I may not move from one place to another without reporting myself and going through a mass of formalities ; every police agent thinks he has a right to bully and to cross-question me ; I believe that if I were to sit down on a bench in a public square some one would come up and ask me what I was about. We have agitators enough who go spouting about the country in favour of free trade ; I say, let us have free trade in our movements first. And, after all, what is it that I have done ? Faithfully served a wealthy Jew banker for the space of three years. I was badly paid, for my master was mean, and, like Dives, almost grudged me the crumbs

which fell from his table. As my imagination is not sufficiently brilliant to make me believe that under the circumstances I was living in heaven, I took to drinking the banker's brandy. You should have seen his anger when he caught me one day purloining the stuff ; he was unable to speak for several minutes, and he grew so red in the face that I thought for a moment that he would have a fit. It was a certain satisfaction, however, to be told that my taste was correct and that the liquor was good. As my master was a friend of the prefect of police, I was clapped into prison, and remained there for six weeks. Is it reasonable to ruin a man's life who has served you faithfully, merely because he has emptied a bottle of brandy ? Good Heavens ! for a bottle of brandy, which you can buy for a trifle in any shop in Berlin ! If this is the sort of justice which we may expect, then I say let us emancipate ourselves and make war upon society, for it will be more profitable and more amusing than to remain silently at the bottom of the social scale with a weight of police regulations above us to crush us down." He emptied his mug, and, slapping it down on the table, said to his comrade, " Let me have another ; I feel very dry from talking so much."

" More beer, waiter !" shouted Heinrich Schultze, in stentorian tones. " I am flush of money to-day, so let us drink freely."

" Does the Colonel, your master, pay you well ?" inquired Gaspar Metzler.

" Pay me well !" shouted Heinrich Schultze. " What should he pay me with, I should like to know ? He has no money, and is overburdened with debts."

"Then how is it that you remain with him?" inquired the other. "I suppose he has not yet exhausted his powers of borrowing? The colonel of a Guard regiment cannot live on nothing, and your master, I see, keeps a carriage, and his wife is always smartly dressed."

"You know nothing," replied Heinrich Schultze, with a sneer; "you have lived in dirty financial circles with Jews and bankers: you do not know how things are done in aristocratic society where money is scarce. The Colonel borrows for his most necessary wants, pledging his word of honour that the money will be repaid. The money-lenders know that rather than see a relative ignominiously turned out of the army, the family will some day settle the account, or that if it comes to the worst that the Emperor will probably intervene to save a scandal from attaching to an officer of high rank. I receive no wages, but make it worth my while remaining with the Colonel, because I take tips from every officer in the regiment whose duty it is to pay court to the Colonel and the Countess his wife. As for the Countess, she has her lovers, I should think, rather of her influence than her charms, for she is passed forty, and she has led a gay life; it is their money which pays for the carriage and for many other things besides."

"Why does not the Colonel divorce his wife and go in for an American heiress?" asked Gaspar Metzler.

"Because he is a wise man and wants promotion, and he knows that a scandal would ruin him; moreover, I do not see what he would gain by announcing that in public which every one already knows in private."

At this moment an altercation arose in the room. A woman who had just entered found her paramour sitting at a table with a female whom he was treating to sausages and beer ; she went up to them, and, after the exchange of much bad language, broke a mug full of beer on the head of her faithless lover. A scuffle ensued, but it was not of long duration, for the waiters of the establishment, accustomed to such scenes, immediately assembled and ejected the party. Already at the door stood the faithful protector of decent citizens, note-book in hand, to be able to report to his superiors on the morrow the details of this interesting episode.

"It is a wretched life we are leading," remarked Gaspar Metzler, after a pause ; "there is no opening for us in this country ; are you not tired of being another man's slave ?"

"I should just think I was," answered Heinrich Schultze, with his deep voice, and bringing down his massive fist upon the table which made the beer mugs rattle in their saucers. "We are not servants, we are really slaves. My master pays me no wages, and yet I cannot leave his service. Men in his position have such influence with the police authorities that they would make my life a burden to me if I left my present situation and tried to find another."

"Why does the Colonel wish to retain you ?" asked Gaspar Metzler.

"He has a very good reason," retorted Schultze, with a hideous smile ; "he does not wish any one else to know what goes on in his own household. Would to God I had never entered any one's service, and that I were still a free man !"

"What induced you then to barter away your freedom?" inquired Gaspar Metzler, contemplating the smoke from his clay pipe rising in clouds to the ceiling.

"I was born in a remote Pommeranian village," replied the other; "when I had reached the proper age, I was marched off by the authorities and made to enter a cuirassier regiment. As if my weight was not sufficient to make a horse sweat under me, they loaded me with a helmet and a breastplate. I served out my time, and when I was discharged I was told to return to my Pommeranian fields. It is easier said than done when you have spent three years in a town, and grown accustomed to frequenting places of amusement, theatres, and beer gardens, and to enjoying the company of housemaids and wenches. After that the dulness of labouring in the fields becomes intolerable; I could no longer bear the idea of being reduced to following the plough, and obliged as my sole distraction to contemplate the tails of two oxen all day long, so I jumped at the offer the Colonel, who had taken a fancy to my size, made me, and I became his servant."

"My mother was wise," remarked Metzler; "she stamped just sufficient infirmities upon my body to save me from the necessity of what is called serving one's country. If I had enough money now I would turn my back upon the fatherland and sail away for America."

"So would I," said Heinrich Schultze; "I was a fool not to have gone when I was young. A cousin of mine emigrated to America to escape from the

military service ; but my father would not let me go with him, for he used to tell us that a man must not shirk the service due to his king. My cousin writes that he has his own house, and is doing well as a farmer ; I remained to serve my king, and my reward is that I must be another man's slave to the end of my life. I shall never know what it is to possess a house of my own as my cousin does, and to be free to do as I like." Heinrich Schultze, with his black-guard's face, put his elbows on the table and, resting his head on his hands, fell into sentimental meditations while watching the frothy foam in the beer mug in front of him.

" Oh ! it is you, Heinrich Schultze," said a rather smartly dressed individual, giving him a slap on the back ; " you seem lost in reverie."

" How do you do, Ludwig Kade ? " replied Schultze, looking up ; " sit at our table. You know Gaspar Metzler ? "

" Certainly," answered the new-comer ; " but before I do so I will fetch a friend who has just come in with me. I have not seen you about of late, Gaspar."

" I do not wonder at it," he answered, with a grumble ; " I have been his Majesty's guest for the last six weeks."

Ludwig Kade soon returned with his friend Moses Jacobsohn, and after introducing him to the other two, they all sat down at the same table.

Ludwig Kade was a man of about forty years of age, with an intelligent face, thin, and much furrowed with lines, and he was smart-looking, which was in keeping with his character of servant to a well-known

demi-mondaine of the town. Moses Jacobsohn, as his name and appearance plainly showed, was a Jew. His occupation, as stated in the official directory of Berlin, was that of a seller of old clothes, and his shop was under the low arcades near the river in the old part of the town. But Moses Jacobsohn was of too energetic and enterprising a nature to be satisfied with the small returns of his official trade, and it was well known to the police that he had not unfrequently acted as a procurer to persons of high rank, as well as been engaged on various occasions in scouring the Eastern Provinces of Prussia and Poland in search of young girls suitable for the harems of the dons of South America. He was a shrewd man was Moses Jacobsohn, and he had his friends in the police force, and patrons of high rank who certainly did not wish to see him exposed ; moreover, he was extremely discreet, and when he saw a storm brewing he would retire for a time from his dangerous and illicit operations, and would relapse into the innocent vendor of old rags. As he had so far caused no public scandal, the police left him unmolested on the intelligible principle that if you cannot thoroughly cleanse a dirty stream it is on the whole best not to stir up the muddy bottom.

" You seem to be both very melancholy to-night," said Ludwig Kade, looking at his companions. " I suppose the world has been treating you badly of late ? "

" It always does so," answered Schultze ; " I am as dissatisfied as I can well be with everything ; and as for Metzler, he has no money, and apparently no prospect of getting any. We were both saying we

should like to emigrate to America, but our worldly possessions are not sufficient to allow us of doing so."

"I would willingly follow any one to that blessed land," said Moses Jacobsohn, in that peculiarly vulgar dialect spoken in Berlin. "Trade is bad ; old clothes bring in nothing ; and the world seems to be suffering from a spasmodic fit of morality. The police at Hamburg and Bremen prevent the free-born German maiden from leaving these shores in search of other climes because some foolish newspapers have been writing violent articles against what they call the white slave traffic. It is a craze which will pass, and the world will return to its old ways ; but meanwhile my funds are running low, and I see the time coming when I will not be able to pay the rent of my shop, and will therefore be reduced to trudge on foot round the country hawking goods to keep body and soul together."

"I am better off than you are then," said Ludwig Kade, "for the creature I serve has so far been able to retain the friendship of well-to-do people ; she has had her ups and downs, no doubt, and there have been days when there was so little money in the house that I was compelled to think of deserting the sinking ship, but somehow she has always succeeded in finding an admirer in the nick of time, so I have continued jogging on with her for several years."

"By what name is she known now ?" inquired Gaspar Metzler.

"She calls herself Madame de Civry," replied Ludwig Kade. "She was born on the Polish frontier ;

but a French name sounds so much better, so she has taken to this one."

"I suppose a person who can give herself so splendid a name must have aristocratic admirers. Who is with her now?"

"The Prefect of Police," replied Kade; "that bloated, satyr-like individual is the person on whom she has now to pour her professional love. He wants to get rid of her, but she will not let him go so easily."

"Does the old ruffian expect to find something better at his age?" said Gaspar Metzler, remembering his six weeks' imprisonment, and shaking his fist as if he would have liked to have killed the prefect.

"That is not the reason," answered Kade. "He is sufficiently satisfied with the charms of my mistress; but the newspapers of late have been so blackguarding the old fool for his incompetence that it is said the Government will get rid of him and give him a small pension. As he does not care to live in comparative poverty I hear he has proposed to the rich widow of a merchant, and in his seventieth year he intends to enter into the bonds of matrimony."

"Ah," interrupted Metzler, "I suppose that now the world is satisfied that he is incompetent he wishes to raise his character by proving that he can at best be a husband."

"I hardly think my mistress will give much of a certificate," said Ludwig Kade, with a sneer. Then he added, after a pause, "I am getting tired of this life; there is too much uncertainty about it—too much anxiety about the future. When the money comes in one spends it freely, instead of saving it for bad times.

I have seen the wealthy patrons leave the woman too often, and I am tired of helping to find others to replace them. I agree with you, Heinrich, the best thing for us to do is to leave for America."

"Find the means, and I will follow you," replied the huge Heinrich Schultze, leaning forward on the table, and looking the last speaker straight in the face. "You have brains enough, they say, find the means, then ; but I think you will discover that it costs more to get there than it does to drink a few mugsful of beer."

Kade remained silent for a few moments ; then he said, "Four resolute men like ourselves ought not to find it so very difficult to raise sufficient funds to take us to America and to start us there under prosperous circumstances. Let us help each other, and we shall manage to do it."

"Why not form a club?" said Gaspar Metzler; "they say that in union lies strength. Let us bind ourselves by an oath that we will obey a leader, and we are sure to succeed. The world has treated us badly ; let us therefore look upon her as our prey and treat her as such. If we work together you will soon see that we shall amass enough money to be able to lead an easy life in the free state over the water. Let us hope that there we shall be delivered from the sight of a policeman at every street corner, armed with weapons of war, as if he was afraid that the innocent citizens for whose protection he was instituted would fall upon him and attack him."

"It is an excellent idea of yours, Gaspar," remarked Kade. "Let us form a club, and begin operations at once."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Heinrich Schultze and Moses Jacobsohn at the same moment.

"We shall lay down our plans carefully," continued Kade, "so that when we make our great *coup* we may reap a rich harvest, and have enough for us all to retire to America with and to live there in comfort. Let us avoid going in for repeated small operations, for we are then certain to be caught by the police. What we do must be on a large scale. We must startle the police authorities, and paralyse them for a time from sheer astonishment. They understand petty and commonplace larcenies, let us therefore leave them alone; moreover, the penalty for a small offence is not so very much lighter than that for a great one. We run very little more risk in playing for a big stake than in repeatedly fishing for small gains."

"That is very wisely spoken," said Metzler; "but what we want to know now is the form which our operations should take. Has no one amongst us got an original idea?"

They all looked at each other in silence, till Moses Jacobsohn remarked, "I have got an idea which is perhaps not very original, but which seems to me practical and easy of execution."

"What is it?" they all said, leaning forward over the table to catch his words, for Moses Jacobsohn was speaking very low.

"There must be plenty of scandals in the upper circles," continued the Jew, "which the general public never hear of—fishy money transactions, seductions, infidelities in married life, and many worse things. I would suggest that we should go in search of

these mysteries, and, when we have discovered them, threaten to expose the persons implicated unless we are paid to keep silence. I do not think that we would incur much danger, for persons in high life who have a black record are generally cowards, and would willingly pay not to be exposed. Our only difficulty will be to make certain that what we threaten to expose is true, and that the price we ask for our silence is not more than the victims can conveniently pay."

"Brilliant idea," said Ludwig Kade; "simple, and sure to give good results. Moses Jacobsohn, we elect you president of our club and director of operations." The two others assented with alacrity to this proposal.

"My good fellows," replied Moses Jacobsohn, "the person we shall require as our leader is a man of position, who knows society well, and the dark spot in every family."

"How shall we find such a person?" inquired Gaspar Metzler, with curiosity.

"I shall look for one," answered the Jew. "I have had dealings with persons of rank. I do not think that a person such as we want is impossible to find. There are any number of ruined men who bear great names. When a man is thoroughly ruined he becomes reckless. I will search for one in that condition and who possesses the information we require. I shall offer him the half of the proceeds of our operations ; the other half, which I trust will not be inconsiderable, we shall divide amongst ourselves. Do you approve of this?"

They all answered in the affirmative. Then there followed an animated discussion as to what people were likely to be suitable for blackmailing purposes.

"Let us leave details for the present," said Moses Jacobsohn; "meanwhile we will take an oath of implicit obedience to our chief when we have found him, for without discipline we shall accomplish nothing. Now let us drink success to our club."

"We have not yet given it a name," remarked Heinrich Schultze. "What shall we call it?"

"If it must be christened," replied the Jew, laughing, "then let us call it the Blackguards' Club; it is as suitable a name as any."

They all raised their beer mugs and solemnly drank success to the new institution.

"Gentlemen," said the host, who always called his guests by that name, "it is four o'clock in the morning, and every one has left. I would like to close the place if you have no objection."

They rose, and having settled their small account, went out of the establishment. The rain had ceased, and so they strolled together down the Unter den Linden before parting company. The great avenue of Berlin was almost deserted; a few scavengers were sweeping the leaves which had fallen from the lime trees, and were making the place look tidy for the morrow. Above the great dome of the palace the morning star shone bright and beautiful.

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGHOUT the month of May Count Klinkenstein continued his attentions to Olga Zanelli, and instead of becoming tired of her society, he seemed, on the contrary, to be getting fonder and fonder of it. He would contrive by some means or another to see her nearly every day, even if it was only for a few moments, and it was evident by her manner that she was growing not quite indifferent to him.

"How are you getting on with your Olga?" asked Baron Zerbino one night as he was dining with Count Klinkenstein in a restaurant. "I believe you spend the whole day with her, for you seem completely to have forgotten your friends. You are never at home now; what do you do with yourself? I am sure I have seen little enough of you during the last month."

"I do not see half enough of her," replied the Count. "I wish I could enjoy a great deal more of her society; but she is a strange girl, and, I think, very shy. Just imagine, she has so far refused all invitations to have supper with me."

"I commend her conduct," said the Baron; "you forget, Klinkenstein, how compromising you are. I am very glad to be assured that you are only cultivating the platonic affections, a course so very unusual to you. It is an excellent discipline, my

dear fellow ; let us only hope that you will continue in that line."

"The deuce take your platonic relations !" exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, annoyed at being chaffed.

"Do you, then, intend to marry her ?" inquired his friend ; "that would certainly bring your military career to a very abrupt termination. If you have really fallen in love with her, you are indeed in a bad way."

"You are very ridiculous, Zerbino ; why should you assume that I am in love ?" said the Count, evidently irritated at the idea that people should think that an officer of the Gardes du Corps could possibly really fall in love with a milliner's assistant. "I have told you over and over again that I like her, that she interests and amuses me ; liking is not loving."

"It is not so easy to draw a distinction between the two words," replied Zerbino. "As I know you to be a man of high principles, I presume you would only apply the word love to the relations between man and wife, and reserve the word liking for those more ardent and reprehensible passions which usually exist between a man and his mistress."

"It is impossible to talk to you," answered Count Klinkenstein ; "you pervert the meaning of everything I say. What business have you to suppose that I want to make Olga Zanelli my mistress ?"

"How could I suggest such a thing !" replied the Baron, with mock gravity. "Do I not know that the morals of the Gardes du Corps officers are as pure as the white of their uniforms !"

"I do not know what the morals of our officers

may be," retorted the Count ; "but I am sure that they cannot be so cynically dissolute as those of you diplomats. I have no intention of doing the girl any harm."

"If that is the case, Klinkenstein, then the sooner you give up going to see her the better. The world is neither green nor charitable, and will not believe that a young and elegant officer pays so much attention to a milliner's assistant only to do her good. But I think it would be as well, if we wish to avoid having a quarrel, to put Olga Zanelli on the shelf for to-night, and to talk of other subjects."

"By all means," replied the Count, with alacrity ; "you seem to think that she is the only subject I care to talk about."

They remained silent for a time sipping their iced champagne, and thinking of some other subject of conversation.

"To-morrow is the first Sunday in June," remarked the Baron, suddenly ; "the weather promises to be fine ; let us make an excursion into the country."

"That is an idea," exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, jumping up from his seat ; "I wonder it never occurred to me before. Good-night, Zerbino."

"Are you off?" cried the Baron ; "why you have not half finished dinner ! What are you up to ?"

"I want to go and write a letter to Olga," he said ; "I shall invite her to spend the day with me at Potsdam. It was an excellent suggestion of yours, Zerbino ; I only hope she will come."

"Then you are again running after your Olga. Of course she will be only too glad to come. I suppose it

will be as well if I stayed away?—you see, I might make you shy, which would be a pity."

"If you do not very much mind, it would be very kind of you, my dear Zerbino, to do so. You are sure to chaff her, and she is not accustomed to that sort of thing. I would not like anything disagreeable to occur the first time she goes out with me. You understand the situation, do you not? Do you not think you might stay in town to-morrow?"

"Of course I will, my dear Klinkenstein," said the Baron, bursting out laughing; "I have no wish whatever of disturbing your amusements. By all means go and have a good coo with your sweetheart under the trees. I think I may call her by that name now she makes excursions all alone with you into the country. You really need not be alarmed; I promise you I will not come. Good luck to you!"

Count Klinkenstein left the restaurant, and the Baron remained to finish his dinner alone.

"What a fool that fellow is," he thought to himself; "he is really in love with that girl. I knew it would come to that, for Klinkenstein is so weak in character, and he has absolutely no experience of the world. I hope it will not end too badly. I have given him enough good advice, I am sure; if he will not follow it, well I shall not be to blame if he breaks his neck. All the same, I would like to be in his place to-morrow. It is very pleasant to spend a day under the trees with a pretty girl. It makes me think of Rosa and the delightful summer afternoons I used to spend with her in the Villa Borghese. What a scene she made when I abandoned her! I wonder

what she is doing now? I suppose another man has taken my place and that I am forgotten?"

Then the Baron ordered coffee and liquors, and while puffing at a cigar fell into meditations on the flight of time, and on the slightness of the affections which generally bind men and women who are only temporarily thrown together, and on the sweet memories which nevertheless remain from such unions.

On leaving the restaurant, Count Klinkenstein drove straight to the Jockey Club, and set to work composing his letter to Olga Zanelli. After having spoiled several sheets of note-paper, he felt satisfied with the following wording :—

"MY DEAR OLGA,—

"To-morrow is Sunday, and you will not be engaged. As the weather has every appearance of being fine, will you make an excursion with me into the country? I have really seen so little of you of late—a few minutes now and again counts for nothing—that I feel the necessity of spending a whole day by your side. Come, and do not disappoint me. Never mind about answering; I shall be at the station at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, and I feel sure you will come.

"With many greetings and salutations, believe me your true friend and admirer,

"KLINKENSTEIN."

Having closed the letter the Count rang a bell, and instructed the waiter who appeared to give it

to a commissioner to have it taken at once to its address. Having done this, he strolled into the card-room, where he found the usual gambling *habitués* round the tables. He stayed long enough in the room to lose some money, and at a reasonable hour retired home to bed.

The next morning Count Klinkenstein, in civilian dress, went to the station long before the time at which the train was advertised to leave. He felt doubts as to whether she would come, and he kept anxiously looking out for any signs of her approach. Presently the Count's heart began beating fast, for he caught sight of her coming along, very neatly dressed, and wearing the bonnet which he had sent her as a present. It was not long before they were both comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage by themselves.

"I am so glad you came," said the Count, as the train moved out of the station. "How fresh you look to-day, and in what good humour you seem to be."

"It always puts me into a good humour to go into the country," she replied. "The happiest days of my childhood were the Sundays I used to spend with my father in the forest. It seems now so very long ago. Times have changed for me since then."

"Do not grow melancholy," interposed the Count, as he saw her fall into meditations. "Let us be unreservedly happy during one whole day, and let us throw all cares to the wind."

"So let it be," she replied, looking up into his face with her bright eyes. "It is no use weeping

over our lot ; let us rather enjoy ourselves when a moment of happiness passes our way."

" That is right, Olga ; we will allow no cloud to spoil our enjoyment of this day."

They got out at the Wannsee station, as they thought that they would be there nearer to the forest than if they went on to the town of Potsdam, as well as further away from the crowd of holiday makers who would naturally go out of Berlin on a fine Sunday in June. There was a restaurant and beer garden at the station, but at that early hour it was almost deserted ; here they had something to eat, and then they started for a long walk across the forest till they came to a high bank overlooking the series of great lakes which are formed below Berlin by the junction of the Havel and the Spree. Here, far from the sound of humanity, they sat down on a grassy spot. Around them was the silence of the vast pine forest, unbroken save by the occasional sharp rap of a woodpecker, or the groaning of the tall, dry stems of the pines as they swayed beneath the gentle June breeze. Below them lay an extensive sheet of water, dotted here and there with the white sail of a pleasure-boat, while on the opposite shore a long string of barges was leisurely being punted in the direction of the great city.

" Lolo, is it not charming to be far away from every one ? " said the Count, lying at full length on the grass, and resting his head on his arm. It was the first time he had called her by that name, and her look of astonishment was at once noticed by him. " Are you surprised at my calling you Lolo ? " he

inquired. "Do not be offended at my taking that liberty ; it seems to me that we have been acquainted with each other for so long a time that we may well put aside ceremony when we are alone together. You told me your family called you by that name ; am I not sufficiently your friend to be allowed the same privilege ? Lolo is so much nicer than Olga." He took her hand which she had been resting on a moss-covered stone, and bringing it close to his lips impressed upon it a long and tender kiss.

"By all means let me be Lolo to you," she replied. "It is a name which has such pleasant recollections for me, and it seems so long since any one called me by it."

Count Klinkenstein, still holding her hand in his, watched her face attentively for a time, and it seemed to him that he detected tears in her eyes. The thought that this beautiful girl was all alone in the world sent a thrill of anger through him, and jumping up from his reclining position he said to her, "Lolo, can you love ?"

His manner and the abruptness of the question made her smile. "How can one tell," she said, "until one has tried ? Love is a curious thing, and there is a saying that we often love most when we are least aware of it."

Count Klinkenstein was on the point of asking her whether she could love him, but his shyness prevented him from doing so. Feeling the necessity of making some remark, he said, "Lolo, have you never thought of loving a man ? have you never felt any longing for married life ?"

"Love and marriage are such distinct things," she replied. "I have noticed that much in my small experience of life. In the Bohemian circles in which I have lived marriages are so rarely happy; one loves one's art first; excitement, praise, and applause next; and last of all, that which one should love most, domestic happiness. Marriage has therefore no particular attractions in my eyes. To marry any one in my position of life would not make me happy; to marry any one else is practically hopeless."

"But do you not think that, on the whole, people are happier for being married?" inquired the Count.

"Certainly," she replied. "Marriage in some cases may answer very well; it is all a matter of temperament. To persons of no imagination the small excitements of the household may be sufficient; for my part, I have too much Bohemian blood in my veins to feel attracted to such a life of decent poverty and dulness. I will not barter away my freedom for such a price. Better to live alone if one is poor, than to feel oneself bound to another person in the same condition. It is difficult enough to struggle against the depressing influences and degradation of poverty without having to lift another soul out of this slough of despond. If one is not rich enough to pay for strong emotions it is more satisfactory to live alone and unfettered, for perhaps then one may still retain enough energy to dream them."

"Do you still think of going on the stage?" inquired the Count.

"I certainly do," she answered, without any hesitation; "it is the only opening which I have; the only

chance persons like myself have of feeling themselves for a moment surrounded by luxury. Besides, I love the live, the excitement, the noise, the applause, the movement of living creatures around me. There is pleasure in having to wear the gaudy dresses in which one appears on the stage, even though one is aware that they must be laid aside after the performance, and that one will have to walk home in cheap woollen garments and boots trodden down at heel. Only think, one may be a princess for a moment, and have at one's feet a noble lover bearing a fine-sounding name, and who whispers beautiful things into one's ears in the grandest language of this earth. Can you not imagine, my friend, that such things are pleasant, illusions though they be, and that they help to raise our spirits for a time above the sordid surroundings in which we have to spend our lives?"

"Lolo, you close your eyes to the drudgery of an actress's life ; the continual repetitions of the same piece, the wearisome rehearsals, the heart burnings, bickerings, and continual squabbles which must exist behind the scenes. The illusions you speak of soon go ; the other disadvantages, however, always remain present."

"Every profession has its drawbacks," quietly remarked Olga Zanelli ; "and in many of them you have not even got the chance of indulging in illusions. Moreover, when one is poor one must be thankful for little pleasures. You who are rich can afford to go in search of your emotions, and if you enter a profession it is only as a sort of amusement and only to save yourself from idleness. With us it is different : our

holidays are few, our toil is long, we are glad if we can enter a profession in whose monotony there are occasional breaks which act like sunshine upon us."

"I should think that a Bohemian life must cover a great deal of misery, and you must be well aware, Lolo, that actresses' marriages do not, as a rule, turn out happily."

"That is true," she replied ; "how should it be otherwise ? When an actress has to pass the more interesting portion of her daily life in the world of fancy, how is it possible for her to descend with satisfaction, perhaps from celestial heights, to the discharge of the trivial and commonplace duties in the real world which a husband may expect of her ? An actress should be independent, unfettered, and free to concentrate all the force and strength of her affections upon her art ; she should not be hampered by the burden of permanent ties ; then perhaps she may succeed, and if she does, she will have the world at her feet, and her triumph will be great ; and if she should remain unknown and unappreciated, her sorrows and disappointments will not be greater than those of a person in my position who has to slave every day at the millinery of hats in a dingy back room into which the sun rarely penetrates, and without any prospect of improving one's position."

" You seem to dislike your milliner's work very much," said Count Klinkenstein ; " can you not find some distraction to make the burden of it seem lighter ? "

" I hate the work cordially," she replied ; " it is true I sing during my hours of labour, and it seems

to make them go by quicker, but still it is like singing in a cage."

"Are you very fond of music, Lolo?"

"I love it more than I can tell you," she answered, quickly. "I do not believe I could live if I did not occasionally hear music. Since my father's death to the time I knew you I was too poor to go to concerts and theatres, and I had never set my foot in the opera-house. I was miserable during that time. In sending me tickets for such places you gave me more pleasure and rendered me a greater service than you were aware of. I never thanked you half enough for them."

Olga Zanelli, with a sweet smile, bent forward and kissed his forehead. The act was done so spontaneously and gracefully that Count Klinkenstein was quite taken aback, and quivering with emotion felt unable to speak. There followed a long silence, during which they remained reclining on the grassy slope contemplating the picturesque landscape before them and absorbed in their own thoughts.

"I wish you would give up that idea of going on the stage," said the Count, breaking the long silence. "It is no place for you now that you are grown up; it was all very well when you were a mere child and your father was always present to look after you. Now, Lolo, you are so beautiful that you would be exposed to all sorts of temptations. Be patient, and do not despair; you may yet marry a man with ample means, who will be able to surround you with real luxuries instead of with the tinsel of the stage."

"No, my friend, do not try and deceive me with such hopes ; in Germany there are too many social prejudices, too much spirit of caste, to permit of such misalliances. A man of good position who would marry me would ruin his career ; if I loved him I would not care to be the cause of his ruin, and therefore I cannot marry. There are, no doubt, temptations on the stage ; but I think I am old enough to protect myself from them. I have lived among actors and actresses from my earliest youth, and I cannot say that I have found them more wicked than other people. They have their faults and weaknesses, for they are human ; but it is a popular delusion which paints them in such black colours. I have no relations in the world to whom I must account for my conduct ; I am free and independent, and may do as I please without troubling myself with what the world may say of me ; but I promise you, who have been my only friend since my father died, that I will never become the mistress of any man unless I love him."

"Lolo," exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, with an earnestness which astonished her, "for God's sake do not go on the stage, promise me that ; I know how it will all end if you do. You think yourself strong, many have thought so too, and did not know their weakness until it was too late. Your beauty will tempt men ; you will be surrounded with suitors ; you will end by becoming neither the wife nor the mistress of one of them, but the common property of all. Lolo, if it should come to that, I think I would kill you. If you pine after luxuries, I will give you whatever

you want. I have so far abstained from offering you money, because I thought you might be offended at it. I am rich. I have far more than I can spend upon myself ; take whatever you want : it will give me more pleasure to see you spend the money than to throw it away upon myself."

The thought that social restraints, and the fact that he was an officer in the army, rendered his marriage with this girl practically impossible, and that if she was to be anything more to him than a friend she must become his mistress stirred his feelings to such a degree that he was seized with an emotional fit, and laying his head on her shoulders he burst into tears.

"What is the matter with you?" inquired Olga Zanelli, half alarmed at the strange conduct of her companion.

He looked up at her and tried to speak, but the words seemed to stick in his throat, and all he could do was to blurt out, "You are so very beautiful, Lolo," and then he laid his head again upon her shoulders to hide his tears, of which he felt ashamed.

Her sensitive woman's heart told her that something had happened which she could not quite understand ; the strange emotion of the Count made a deep impression upon her, and from that moment she began to feel differently towards him than she had hitherto done, and he became to her something more than a mere acquaintance. There followed another long pause, during which they both remained silent ; then she turned the conversation on to other subjects to the great relief of the Count. Lolo now seemed to

be seized with a fit of gaiety, and continually broke out into snatches of song.

"Let us gather some wild flowers," she said to her companion. "I may as well bring back to town something to remind me of the country."

So they rose and descended the grassy slope on which they had been seated to where the ground was flat along the shores of the lake. There the grass was high and the flowers plentiful. The Count exerted himself to the utmost to select and pick the most beautiful ones for his fair companion, and he did not hesitate to get wet in trying to catch some of the water-lilies which floated on the surface of the lake at a short distance from the shore.

They had wandered about for a considerable time, when the Count remarked that the sun was getting low, and that it would be well to return to the station, and to order dinner at the restaurant there. So they retraced their steps through the forest, where already the gloom was setting in, and where the shadows of the tall pines were growing every minute longer and longer on the sandy soil. Silently for a time they walked along, until Lolo, unable to restrain the happiness she felt, woke the echoes through the forest as she sang, with her sweet and clear voice, the love song of Fortunio.

Arrived at the station, they ordered dinner to be served on the terrace of the restaurant, where they would be a little away from the crowd of Sunday excursionists, who were drinking beer amid much noise and jollification in the garden of the establishment. The dinner passed off agreeably, for Lolo was now in

high spirits, and the Count had recovered from his fit of violent emotions. It was late when they returned to Berlin, and at the door of the shop in the Leipzigerstrasse where Lolo lived the Count took leave of her, and received that kiss which he so longed for but which he felt too shy to demand.

CHAPTER X.

ON the evening of the following day Count Klinkenstein and Baron Zerbino were both invited to dine at the British Embassy. It was late in the season to give a great diplomatic banquet, as most people were out of town ; but as a very distinguished stranger was at that moment passing through Berlin, the ambassador had thought it his duty to invite princes, generals, and other great persons to meet him. The fine suite of reception-rooms had been thrown open, and innumerable wax candles shed a soft light on the brilliant uniforms which filled the rooms. The servants in their gorgeous liveries, with their knee-breeches and powdered hair, stood like sentinels at the doors. There were so many persons of high rank present, that at dinner Count Klinkenstein and the Baron found themselves seated at the end of the table on either side of Sydney Gray, one of the secretaries of the embassy.

"I hear you have been spending a happy Sunday at Potsdam with your Italian girl," said Sydney Gray, addressing the Count.

"It is true," he replied ; "I went with her to Wannsee. I thought it would be kind to take her out of town for a day. I suppose Zerbino told you ? He can never keep anything to himself."

The Baron protested that he was the most discreet of men, but that he could not possibly have imagined that his friend wished his expedition to the country to be kept secret.

"You seem to be getting very philanthropic, my dear Klinkenstein," remarked Sydney Gray, "now that you take young ladies into the country to give them an airing on Sundays. May I ask whether you restrict your attentions to one person, or have a large number a participation in your disinterested kindness?"

"You may chaff me as much as ever you like," replied the Count, "it will not alter the fact that it was a kindness on my part to take her out for a day in the country."

"By the way, what is her name?" inquired the Englishman. "I have quite forgotten it."

"Lolo," replied the Count.

"Is she now called Lolo?" broke in the Baron, much amused. "I always thought her name was Olga."

"Olga or Lolo, it is all the same thing," replied the Count, rather sharply.

"Are you still as infatuated with her as you were some six weeks ago?" inquired Sydney Gray.

"I am as fond of her now as I have ever been."

"Do you remember the supper we had together the night you returned from that foolish journey to Baden-Baden?" continued Sydney Gray. "Did I not advise you then to shun this girl as much as possible? I have no doubt that instead of doing so you have been every day to see her. As you call her Lolo, you must

already be on intimate terms with her ; and I suppose that in a short time you will announce to us that she has become your mistress, and in some six months' time having got tired of her, you will appeal to us your friends to get you out of the mess, and then there will be tears and scenes and certainly a great deal of scandal."

" Do not say anything nasty against her," pleaded the Count ; " you do not know what she is. You wrong her if you think that she is my mistress ; she is not that, and not likely ever to be it. My dear Gray, let us leave this subject alone."

A silence fell for a time on that end of the table, then the Baron, who could not bear to hold his tongue for any length of time, began a loud discussion with his neighbour, an elderly general, on the merits of the German stage, a subject about which he was profoundly ignorant, as he was unacquainted with the language, and rarely set his foot in a Berlin theatre ; that did not prevent him from violently abusing German and extolling French acting, and from maintaining that the theatres of Paris were the only ones which could be visited with satisfaction by an educated man. " In London," he shouted into the general's ear, " they act no better than they do here ; but at least they present you with beautiful scenery, gorgeous dresses, and lovely female charms ; here your scenery is shabby, your choruses cannot sing, and as for the female *personnel* it is simply revoltingly ugly." The solemn old general took his lively neighbour *au sérieu*, and defended the stage of his country from the aspersions which had been thrown upon it.

French acting, he argued, possessed every imaginable bad point ; it was exaggerated in manner and declamatory, and as for French plays they were full of false sentiment, and suggestive of everything that was wicked, and though they were undoubtedly improved when presented in a German dress, yet even then they were scarcely decent. It should be remarked that the worthy general had never in his life been to a French theatre, and that the only time he had set foot in Paris was on the occasion of the entry of the victorious German army into that city, so his knowledge of French acting was almost on a par with the little Baron's acquaintance with German theatres. Their real ignorance of the subject did not prevent an amusing discussion from taking place, which enlivened the dull and solemn dinner, and the ambassador, flanked by two portly and uninteresting princesses of exalted rank, visibly sighed for the companionship of such lively persons as were at the bottom of his table.

On Count Klinkenstein's other side sat a thin and meek-looking gentleman who had so far not ventured to open his lips during dinner, and whose dress unmistakably pronounced him to be an English clergyman. In the midst of the profusion of military uniforms the sombre garments of this man of peace seemed quite out of place. The circumstances which had brought him to Berlin were these. The society for the due observance of the Sabbath had selected him as being a person full of zeal and as having a certain literary reputation, for he was a well-known contributor to several religious papers, and had entrusted him with a mission to report on the way

the Sabbath was kept in Protestant countries on the Continent. He was a Dissenting minister in a great northern city, and before starting to carry out his mission he had applied to the member of parliament for that town to obtain for him a circular letter of recommendation to the British representatives abroad. As that member's seat was considered far from safe, the Ministry at once acceded to the request of one of his constituents, and the letter of recommendation was written and forwarded to the reverend gentleman. As the Secretary of State was signing the same, he remarked to his private secretary that it would be a blessing if these troublesome parsons would stay at home where there was plenty of work for them to do, and to leave other countries to look after themselves ; however, if he only wanted a trip on the Continent, this letter would certainly be useful, and would probably provide him with invitations to better dinners than the poor man had ever eaten. On arriving at Berlin the letter was presented to the ambassador, who expressed himself much interested in the reverend gentleman's mission, but dreading to have the society of so zealous and religious a person at dinner all alone, he invited him to the great banquet he was about to give in a few days. That was how the Reverend Reubens Kidd found himself dining at the ambassador's table. He was a shy and timid person, and he felt quite uncomfortable at finding himself in the society of so many foreigners, for he did not speak a word of any other language than English. He had been brought up at the grammar school of his native city, where he had acquired a competent knowledge of

things ancient, and he knew the whereabouts of every spot in what he was accustomed to call with muchunction the Holy Land, but he was grossly ignorant of modern history or geography, or general practical knowledge of the world.

"Have you ever been here before?" said Count Klinkenstein, addressing the Rev. Reubens Kidd, for he thought that it was incumbent upon him to say something to his neighbour during dinner.

"Never, sir," replied the parson; "I have never as yet been out of my country, and I must confess that I am very much astonished at what I have so far seen. I had an idea that Berlin was a town of the size of Sheffield or Newcastle; I did not expect to find so large a city."

"We are making progress," remarked the Count. "Are you pleased generally with what you have seen?"

"I cannot with sincerity say I am," he replied. "I am astonished at what I saw yesterday. It was a revelation to me. I could hardly believe my eyes that in a Protestant country the Sunday would be spent by the people as it is."

"What did you see to annoy you?" inquired the Count.

"What I saw, sir? I saw everything which a Christian man would wish not to see. I went into some of your churches—they seem to be few and far between—and the attendance was far from good. In the streets every one seemed to be out in order to amuse himself; at the station there were crowds of excursionists, and I am even told that there were

horse-races yesterday, and that the theatres were open."

"Do you find fault with that?" inquired the Count, rather amused at the seriousness of his neighbour. "I also went out of town yesterday, as I thought it was the most sensible way of spending a fine Sunday."

"The military element has always had the reputation of giving bad examples," answered the parson. "I am afraid it is an ungodly profession. One of the first duties of a Christian people is to keep the Sabbath. That it is so badly kept here is probably due to the unfortunate influence of the large number of soldiers one sees everywhere. I was quite taken by surprise at their great numbers; even here at the British Embassy I see nothing but uniforms; this is unknown in England. Sir, you Germans must indeed be a very military nation."

"We have had that reputation for some time," remarked the Count.

"I am sorry for you, then," went on the Reverend Reubens Kidd; "for a military nation is generally a bad one. How can people who make it their chief duty to study how to kill others be godfearing? It seems to me that you require a great deal of levelling up here. Every Sunday there ought to be preachers in your streets, in your thoroughfares, in your public places and parks. I can assure you, sir, that I was so moved yesterday by what I saw that I very nearly began preaching in your Thiergarten to the people who were engaged in desecrating the Sabbath. I was only restrained by the consideration that they would pro-

bably not understand me if I spoke to them in English."

"It is just as well that you did not try," said the Count, "for you would most certainly have been stopped by the police. You cannot trifle with them in Berlin, and they are very severe upon persons who make a nuisance of themselves and create disturbances in public."

"What!" exclaimed the parson. "Is there no liberty as well as no religious feeling in this country? I pity you, sir—I pity you from the bottom of my heart. You do not know the blessings of freedom. You should come to England and see them. Arrest a man for preaching in the open air! It is abominable. Who are your governors, I should like to know? The Mussulman Turk, I am sure, would be more tolerant than you are who call yourselves a Christian nation."

"Every country has its customs and habits," replied Count Klinkenstein. "What suits you in England might not suit us here; personally I am very much opposed to individuals being allowed to parade their eccentricities out of doors."

"Eccentricities!" cried the parson. "Sir, do you call it an eccentricity to preach the Gospel of Christ to the people? It is pitiful to hear young men talking of serious subjects with such levity."

His further remarks, to Count Klinkenstein's intense relief, were cut short by the ambassador rising, for the dinner was over.

"For goodness' sake deliver me from that loquacious priest!" said the Count, coming up to Sydney Gray, as they were both walking out of the dining-room. "I

spoke to him out of kindness, as I noticed that he did not open his lips during dinner, but I did not expect to have a sermon preached to me."

" You can easily slip away unperceived presently," replied Sydney Gray, " for the ambassador has a reception to-night, and the rooms will soon be full of people."

" I shall certainly do so as soon as it is possible," said the Count, for the presence of that priest, and the dread that he may try to button-hole me and inflict a sermon upon me, make me feel quite unwell."

" Where can I find you later ? "

" At the Jockey Club ; after the excellent dinner of your ambassador I feel in the humour to go in for a good gamble to-night."

" Do not let yourself be carried away, Klinkenstein ; I shall come and see how you are getting on as soon as I am able to leave ; but you see I am on duty to-night, and I must stay here till all the guests are gone."

Half an hour later Count Klinkenstein and Baron Zerbino edged their way through the crowd of distinguished persons who already filled the rooms, intending to escape unperceived ; but the Reverend Renbens Kidd noticed their movements, and, getting to the door of the room at the same time as they did, he touched the Count gently on the shoulder, and said, " Sir, I would be much obliged if you would give me your address, that I may be able to send you a tract I have written on the Church Militant."

Count Klinkenstein gave it him with reluctance, and then slipped through the door as quickly as it was possible, and lost no time in removing himself to the more frivolous atmosphere of the Jockey Club.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the preceding few nights the Jockey Club had been passing through one of its periodical fits of heavy gambling, and when Count Klinkenstein and his friend Baron Zerbino entered the house they found, although it was still pretty early, that the card-room was already full of people, and that nearly every table was occupied. One could see many anxious faces poring over the cards, in doubt whether the sums lost on the previous nights would be recovered or their amount only increased. An unmistakable feeling of excitement and agitation prevailed in the room, and although silence was enjoined by the rules of the club, yet whenever a particularly lucky combination of cards turned up in some player's hand an immediate and loud buzz of conversation rose from the persons who were watching the game. Round the tables where the more reckless players were seated there was quite a crowd of on-lookers, many of whom had an interest in the issue of the game by the bets which they had made.

About eleven o'clock, the party at the British Embassy being over, Sydney Gray appeared, and, finding that Count Klinkenstein was engaged in making foolish and excessive wagers, offered, in order to prevent him from doing so, to play at *écarté* with him for low points. They found a table at the end of the room,

but before they had been able to play many games they were disturbed by the arrival of Banker Grunebaum. This person had been the hero of the last few nights, for though he had begun by losing heavily, luck had eventually turned, and he had been able not only to recover what he had previously lost, but also to win some very large sums of money from members of the club. Directly the Banker had entered the room all gambling ceased and the tables were deserted, and quite a crowd collected round the arch-gambler eager to inquire what his intentions were. There followed a moment of quiet, as if every gambler was trying to recover calmness of nerve for the real work of the night.

"What are you going to do to-night, Herr Grunebaum?" inquired the ducal head of the house of Hohenschwanz." Are you going to give us a chance of recovering some of our money? I never saw such luck as you have had of late. It is really not fair."

"I believe the Jew has sold his soul to the devil," muttered Count Immersdorf, who had been one of the heavy losers of the previous nights, and who had had the greatest difficulty in raising a loan of some £500 that day at a high rate of interest in order to have a chance of recouping himself that night.

"I am quite ready for the fray," answered Herr Grunebaum; "it is my last night for some time, as I leave to-morrow for Ostend with my family. I ask for nothing better than that you should play high. I can stand some reverses, gentlemen; look," and he pulled out of his pocket a large roll of bank-notes, "I have here 400,000 marks; come, you may do your best to make a hole in it."

The announcement that the Banker was leaving Berlin on the morrow created quite a sensation among the players in the room whose losses had been great, and who realised that their only chance of righting their finances was to go in for another heavy gamble that night, and to trust to better luck. Those who had not brought enough money were eagerly engaged borrowing from their friends and acquaintances who were better provided than themselves, at least enough to enable them to take a part in the coming gamble. Count Immersdorf was one of the most pressing in trying to borrow, for he considered the £500 he had with difficulty raised that day was a quite inadequate sum for his purposes, but he met with little success, for he seemed to have no friends, and even Herr Schlangenbeck, with whom he had been so intimate, declined to lend him anything, for of late a coolness had arisen between them owing to the ill-success of certain betting transactions, for which the Count was held responsible.

There was also a certain Lieutenant von Schmäling who seemed very eager to borrow, and he succeeded in raising some £600 from among his friends. Count Klinkenstein, who was always ready to help a friend in money matters, and who that morning had received from his agent a large consignment of rents, lent him a couple of hundred pounds with the greatest alacrity. Lieutenant von Schmäling was a young officer who had but quite recently joined one of the Guard Uhlan regiments quartered at Potsdam. He had been a heavy loser on the previous nights, it was rumoured to the amount of some two or three thousand pounds.

In borrowing from Count Klinkenstein he had said to him : " If I do not win to-night, I do not know what I shall do." His father owned considerable estates, but they were heavily mortgaged, and he had a large family.

" Let us begin our *écarté*," said the Duke, taking a seat at a green baize covered table in the middle of the room.

" Certainly," replied the Banker, seating himself opposite the Duke. " I shall, as usual, play against the club ; and I am prepared to accept any stakes you gentlemen may wish to lay against me."

Every other table in the room was now deserted, and such a crowd of persons gathered round the two players that it became difficult to see what was going on, and chairs and even a table had to be brought, on which members could stand and watch with greater comfort the varying fortunes of the games which were of such importance to so many of them. Before beginning to play Herr Grunebaum called for a waste-paper basket, which he put by his side, and into which he threw all the paper money he had brought with him. New packs of cards having been brought, the players cut for deal, which the Banker won, and the play began. The backers of the Duke laid their money down either in the shape of gold or notes, or " jetons," which they obtained from an official of the club, and on which the value they represented was clearly marked. From his basket Herr Grunebaum pulled up enough bank-notes to balance the amount laid against him, and then proceeded to deal the cards. He turned up the king ; like most gamblers, he was

superstitious, and he remarked, "It is all right ; I shall win to-night."

However, in spite of the royal card, he lost the first game, and the Duke ceded his chair to the next player on the list. There was a visible expression of delight on the faces of the gamblers as each one of them removed from the green cloth his share of the Banker's money. The next name on the list was that of Count Immersdorf ; as he had the reputation of being a good player, a great deal of money was laid on him. The game proved intensely exciting, as both sides had scored four points, when the Banker succeeded, through bad play on the part of the Count, in making the fifth. With the greatest unconcern Herr Grunebaum brushed the gold, notes, and "jetons" into the basket by his side. Count Klinkenstein followed. He was of too nervous and excitable a nature to play well on such an occasion, when he was surrounded by so many eager spectators, and when such large sums were dependent on the way he played his cards. He lost the game, and a loud murmur of uncomplimentary comments on the way he had played the game rose from his unfortunate backers, who saw their money swept into the large basket by the Banker's side. When quiet had been restored the play continued with many ups and downs of fortune.

Herr Grunebaum had just had a run of luck when it became the turn of the Landrath of Jüterbock to handle the cards. He was a rotund, jovial little man, with a red face ; he was very popular among the members of the club, for he was fond of sport and could stand more drink than most of them, and he

was always in good humour. He never allowed his official duties to prevent him from coming up to Berlin to spend a few days in his favourite Jockey Club whenever there was any racing of importance at Hoppegarten. His fortune was moderate, and he was wise enough never to impair it by reckless gambling or betting.

"Now, old fellow," said one of the bystanders, "show the Banker what you can do."

"Pile the money on me," replied the Landrath, laughing ; "you will see that I will win for you."

Herr Grunebaum had to deal the cards, and something like a thousand pounds were laid against him. He turned up the king and *won the game*.

"You have no luck to-night," muttered Count Immersdorf impatiently, for he had staked £200 on the Landrath, and he looked upon them as lost.

"Do not worry," replied the Landrath, with a merry look in his face which irritated the Count ; "go and have a drink and keep cool ; there is nothing lost yet ; Herr Grunebaum has only made two points ; you will see I *will win this game*."

"I wish the dence you would," remarked Count Immersdorf, turning his back upon the players, for he was too agitated to watch the game.

The Landrath won the next two games, making a point each time ; then he and his opponent alternately scored single points, till they both stood at four. Count Immersdorf had returned to the table, and so intense was his excitement that the perspiration was running down his face ; he was generally remarkable for his coolness, but at the present moment the loss

of two hundred pounds meant almost financial ruin to him. The cards were again dealt, and amid breathless excitement the Landrath just succeeded in pulling through. Herr Grunebaum, with his elbow, brushed the bank-notes on the table over to his opponent.

"Bring me a drink!" shouted the Landrath. "Playing such a game makes one hot."

"You deserve it," said Count Immersdorf, as he put the four hundred pounds into his pocket.

The play continued for several hours without anything of particular interest occurring. At two o'clock in the morning Sydney Gray thought it time to go home, and so did Baron Zerbino. They neither of them were gamblers, though they had on this occasion put down a few sovereigns now and again, and they had had the good fortune of winning a small sum. Count Klinkenstein, having had a good dinner at the Embassy and innumerable drinks subsequently, was getting reckless in his play, so his two friends tried to induce him to come home, but without success, for he answered all their persuasive arguments by saying, "My good fellows, I am having a run of luck to-night; I am already six hundred pounds to the good. It is nonsense to leave when one just happens to be winning."

"Luck will change," replied Sydney Gray. "You ought to be highly satisfied at having won so much."

"I mean to win a great deal more," answered the Count. "Good-night; we shall meet to-morrow at the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs about mid-day."

"All right," replied Sydney Gray, as he left the room with the Baron.

The card-room was getting now less crowded as many members had left, and only the most inveterate gamblers remained. Every one was at his ease; the officers had their tunics unbuttoned, and some members had even allowed themselves to take off their coats, for the night was warm. So far Herr Grunnebaum had won, though not to any very large extent. Count Klinkenstein and Lieutenant von Schmäling were each of them some six or seven hundred pounds to the good, while Count Immersdorf, much to his disappointment, was just about where he was at the beginning of the evening. The two heavy losers had been the Ducal President of the Club and Herr Schlangenbeck, both of whom had lost a couple of thousand pounds. Several persons had lost or won smaller sums, among the former was Prince Adolphus of Hohenschwanz, a son of the Duke and a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment. As he had lost all the cash he possessed he had applied to his father to lend him some notes, but the Duke had declined, saying, "Go to bed, my boy; you have done enough for to-night: two of a family playing at cards is too much. Go away." The heavy and sleepy Prince therefore retired to the adjoining room, where he stretched himself out on a couch and soon fell asleep, and the noble Duke, while engaged in losing his money, had the satisfaction of hearing the loud snores of his offspring, and of knowing that at least one of his numerous sons was for the moment incapacitated from doing any mischief.

Now that so many of the mere on-lookers had left, and that only the real gamblers remained seated round the table, the play continued in a more business-like manner. The fortunes of the game varied much, but on the whole it seemed as if Herr Grunebaum were steadily losing. The gamblers were jubilant, and the Duke's face was radiant, for although his income was too large to make him feel his losses very seriously, yet he loved winning. In spite of bad fortune Herr Grunebaum remained undoubtedly the most cool-headed person in the room; he indulged in few remarks, and he seemed absolutely unperturbed by the magnitude of the stakes involved, and indifferent to whether he lost or won.

"We are all in for a run of luck," remarked Lieutenant von Schmäling. "I shall be able to pay off a large portion of my debts to-morrow. I would not miss being here for anything."

"It does look as if the Banker's luck had deserted him," said the Duke. "We must increase the stakes against him."

Four o'clock in the morning had struck. There followed a pause of a few minutes, during which the members engaged in a buzz of conversation.

"Gentlemen, do any of you care to continue the game?" inquired Herr Grunebaum, thumbing the cards.

"We all do," was the unanimous reply.

"I am quite ready then, gentlemen. Whose turn is it to play against me?"

"Mine," said Herr Schlangenbeck, taking his seat opposite to Herr Grunebaum.

The cards were dealt, and the game began again.

"I mark the king," said the Banker. "It is a long time since I have seen him; now he returns, I hope my luck will do the same." He made the five points quickly, and raked the heavy stakes into his basket.

The Duke now took the cards, but he too was unlucky, and lost the game. He was followed by Count Klinkenstein, who was also unsuccessful, as well as Count Immersdorf, the next player. Herr Grunnebaum had now won four games running. Blank dismay seemed to seize the players as they saw their winnings gradually swept into the Banker's basket.

"Luck has indeed changed," moaned Lieutenant von Schmäling, who had only four hundred pounds remaining, and who thought of his heavy debts and of the impossibility to pay them.

"Low stakes is now the game," remarked Count Immersdorf. "Let Herr Grunnebaum's luck run itself out, and then when it begins to turn pile it on."

The advice was followed, and the stakes were comparatively low during the next three games, which the Banker still succeeded in winning.

"This cannot last," exclaimed the Duke, as he laid a thousand pounds upon the table. "He has already won seven times running, he is certain to lose the next game."

The stakes were run high; Count Immersdorf put £250 on the table, the half of what remained to him, and Lieutenant von Schmäling, carried away by the example of the others, put down a hundred pounds out of his small store.

The cards were dealt and Herr Grunebaum, after a series of most exciting games, won again.

"This is incredible!" murmured the Duke. "Herr Grunebaum, have you any objection to taking a cheque of mine?"

"None whatever," replied the Banker.

The Duke wrote out a cheque, and handed it to Herr Grunebaum, who cashed it out of the contents in his basket.

Feeling certain this time that the Banker must lose the next game, Count Immersdorf staked all the money which remained to him, and Lieutenant von Schmälting doubled his previous stake of £100. With breathless anxiety the players watched the course of the game, which Herr Grunebaum again won with ease.

A loud oath escaped from Count Immersdorf as he saw himself ruined, for at that moment he did not know where he could raise even a five-pound note. Rising from his chair livid, with his face contorted by his violent agitation, he went and sat on a divan at the furthest end of the room and buried his face in his hands; the other persons present were too occupied with their own affairs to pay any attention to him.

Lieutenant von Schmälting, reduced to the possession of a single £100, hesitated whether he should put it all on at once or not, but thinking that to play for a smaller sum would do him no good in his present position he risked it all, hoping that if he were now lucky enough to win three or four times running he would recoup himself to a certain extent, and it certainly did seem improbable that Herr Grunebaum could possibly continue to win; yet this was to be the case,

and it was only at the eleventh game that the Banker's run of luck ceased and that he lost, but the stakes were then of low value. The clock in the room struck five.

"I think it is time to go to bed," remarked the Duke, and as no one seemed much inclined to dispute that point and to continue to play, Herr Grunebaum mopped his face, and having collected his winnings bade good-night to the company and went home. He was soon followed by the Duke and most of the other persons in the room.

"Are you going to pass the night here?" said Count Klinkenstein, as he crossed the adjoining room, and found Prince Adolphus of Hohenschwanz still asleep and snoring lustily on a couch.

"Eh! Is it so late?" inquired the Prince, starting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Past five in the morning," answered Count Klinkenstein. "We have had a bad night of it; I have lost everything I had previously won; and as for your father, he has simply dropped thousands."

"Old fool!" muttered the Prince; "why did he not let me play? I could not have done worse than he has." Then taking the Count's arm he left the club with him.

The card-room was now deserted by every one except the jovial Landrath, who, having won a little, was in excellent good humour, and Lieutenant von Schmäling, who was leaning against the mantelpiece absorbed in thoughts.

"It is ridiculous nonsense going to bed at this hour," said the Landrath, pulling back the heavy window

curtains and letting the rays of the new risen sun enter the room. "What is the matter with you, Schmälting? Are you unwell? You look so very pale."

"I have lost heavily to-night," replied the young officer in a low voice.

"Cheer up, that is nothing," continued the Landrath; "lose to-day, win to-morrow, that is the way with card-playing. You will have better luck another day, my dear fellow."

"It is a serious matter for me to lose so much money," remarked the Lieutenant; then heaving a deep sigh, he added, "I do not know what I shall do."

"What you will do?" echoed the Landrath. "I will tell you what you will do; you will gamble again in a night or two and win. My dear fellow, it is no use being depressed about it. Spilt milk is spilt milk, and it is no use crying over it. What the deuce of a luck to be sure that Grunebaum had to win ten times running. He will have to wait some time before he does it again. It was a grand night, though; I would not have missed being present for a good deal. If you are momentarily in want of money, Schmälting, you are welcome to have this couple of hundred pounds which I have won."

"No, thank you," answered the officer, much touched by the Landrath's kind offer; "it would be of no use to me." Then crossing the room he went up to him, and shaking his hand warmly, he added, "Good-bye, I must go now, for I have to return to my barracks at Potsdam," and he left the club.

The Landrath tried to rise, and with some difficulty

succeeded in reaching an arm-chair, into which he let himself drop, for the many drinks he had imbibed that night had brought about a certain giddiness, and he did not feel very steady on his legs.

"This club is going to the dence," he muttered to himself; "not a soul remains to whom one can talk. Why do they want to go to bed so early? Are they all afraid of their wives? Thank God, I am still an independent bachelor, and can do as I please!"

A waiter entered at that moment to put out the lights which were still burning and to make the room look tidy. Then the Landrath of Jüterbock, turning round in his arm-chair, began shouting at the waiter for having disturbed him and ordered up another pot of beer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE next day Sydney Gray, Baron Zerbino, and some other diplomatic colleagues were lunching in the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs seated at a table near the window, from which they could see everything which passed in the Unter den Linden. The rooms seemed fuller than usual that day, and every table was occupied. In the further room was the Duke of Bummelberg, with two of his sons and several officers. Monsieur Lechef was much occupied going from one table to another to inquire into the wants of his guests and seeing that they were attended to. Most of the persons who had been gambling so high at the Jockey Club were lunching here, and the frequent pop of champagne corks told unmistakably of shattered nerves which required bracing up, or of that depressed feeling which generally follows a night passed out of bed.

"What has become of Klinkenstein?" inquired Sydney Gray of Baron Zerbino. "He said he would lunch with us to-day."

"I do not know," replied the Baron. "I have not seen him this morning; but I suppose he stayed up all night, and is now gone to bed. Do you know what took place at the Jockey Club after we left?"

"No," said Sydney Gray, "except that some one I

met told me that nearly every one lost, and that Herr Grunebaum retired with his pockets full of money."

"Just so," answered the Baron. "It seems he won ten games running at *écarté*. The Duke lost thousands, and I expect Klinkenstein also lost heavily."

At that moment Count Klinkenstein entered the restaurant. He was looking very pale and agitated, and seeing Sydney Gray and Baron Zerbino seated at a table he went straight up to them.

"Something awful has happened," he said, "a telegram has just been received at the Jockey Club to say that Schmäling has shot himself."

The news spread in a moment through the restaurant. The Duke rose from his seat, and came to inquire if any details were known.

"None," replied Count Klinkenstein. "The telegram only says that his servant found him dead in his rooms in the barracks. He must have shot himself almost directly he got back to Potsdam."

"It is a very unfortunate occurrence," remarked the Duke. "Only two months ago another member of the club committed suicide in consequence of losses at cards. This is most inconvenient. It will give rise to a great deal of scandal, and, as president of the club, I suppose I shall have to see that all heavy gambling ceases for a time. Schmäling has shown very little regard for the feelings of others in shooting himself; he ought to have disappeared and gone to America. This is most annoying—most annoying." Then the Duke returned to his table, and continued his luncheon with excellent appetite.

"Let me have a brandy-and-soda," said Count Klin-

kenstein to Monsieur Lechef, who came to inquire what he would order for lunch. "I do not feel hungry at present ; I shall order what I want later."

"This event seems to have upset you a great deal," remarked Sydney Gray to the Count.

"I have seen a good deal of him since I have been in Berlin," he replied. "It was only a few hours ago that we parted at the club. I can hardly realise it."

"Were his losses so heavy ?" inquired the Baron ; "and was there no possibility of his paying ?"

"I understand that he owed some fifty thousand marks," replied Count Klinkenstein. "I could easily have raised the money for him. It is a horrible business. I assure you, Gray, that it has left such an impression upon me that I do not think I shall ever touch cards again."

"In that case his death will have done some good," said Sydney Gray. "Do you know whether he had ever promised his family that he would not gamble ?"

"He had," answered the Count, "for he had twice already been helped out of difficulties, and I am afraid that is the very reason which has driven him to do away with himself."

"Such promises are always foolish," remarked Sydney Gray. "The real gambler is always ready to make them when in difficulties, probably in all sincerity; but directly temptation comes his way he yields to it and forgets his promise."

The news of this sad event seemed to cast a gloom upon the company, for they had all known Lieutenant von Schmälting well, and so luncheon was finished mostly in silence.

"I shall take a walk," said Count Klinkenstein, as he left the restaurant with Sydney Gray; "I feel the need of it. Do you care to come with me?"

"I wish I could," he replied; "but I have unfortunately work to do at the Embassy which will occupy me all the afternoon."

They parted, therefore, at the door of Monsieur Lechef's establishment, and Count Klinkenstein, hailing a cab, drove to the station and entered the first train which would take him into the Grünwald, the part of the forest which lies in the immediate vicinity of Berlin. He felt the need of being alone for a time to meditate over the event which had given him such a shock. Lieutenant von Schmäling had been one of the first acquaintances he had made on his coming to Berlin to join the Gardes du Corps, and Count Klinkenstein could not help shuddering at the thought that had he not had the good fortune of being rich he, too, might at that moment be dead by his own hands, for he had lost heavily on the previous night as well as on former occasions. It was the first time in his life that he had been brought face to face with a really tragic occurrence, and it not unnaturally left a deep impression upon him.

It was one of those beautiful days in June when the sky is without a cloud, and the air, though hot, does not feel oppressive; the green forest was radiant in the pride of summer; but the Count was blind to all the beauties of nature around him, for he was entirely absorbed in his own thoughts. With a swinging step he hurried along, as if the quick movement gave relief to the violence of his emotions. He walked on and on

till, looming through the trees, appeared in the distance the outskirts of Berlin and the huge barrack-like structures, six or seven stories high, in which the artisan classes live. He did not stop till he reached his rooms. A reaction had set in, and the depression under which he had laboured when he started had given way to a feeling that though there might be much which was tragic in this world, yet if we looked at it with a fair mind we might still discover much that was noble and beautiful in it. He lay down on a couch, for he felt tired, and occupying his mind with pleasanter thoughts he gradually fell asleep. When he woke he saw the gorgeous colours of the setting sun reflected on his window-panes, and looking at his watch he found that it was time to go and dine. He strolled down the Unter den Linden, and entered one of the fashionable restaurants where he was likely to meet acquaintances, for Count Klinkenstein was not a man who cared to dine by himself, especially when he had just been passing through a fit of depression. He found several brother officers, and had a pleasant dinner with them, washed down with copious draughts of champagne. Dinner over, the officers announced their intention of finishing the evening at the Jockey Club ; but as Count Klinkenstein felt a disinclination to re-enter the club so soon after the experiences he had just gone through, he said he would take a drive round the Thiergarten and afterwards go to bed early, as he had had but little sleep on the previous night. He entered a cab, and drove down the great avenue which leads to Charlottenburg, but he had not proceeded very far before he noticed Olga Zanelli walking by herself along the foot-

path by the side of the road. He stopped the cab, paid the fare, and in a moment he was by her side.

"How do you do, Lolo?" said the Count, taking her arm.

"Oh, is it you!" she replied, giving a start, and evidently much surprised.

"Lolo, I hope I am not disturbing your plans," continued the Count, walking by her side; "what brings you out at this hour? You look quite melancholy, I declare. Can it be that, like the ordinary German maiden, you find it necessary to go into ecstasy over sunsets and rising moons, and that you have come out to sit on a bench to read Heine's 'Book of Songs,' and to grow sentimental over it?"

"I have not come out to read," she replied, "but rather to think over what is to become of me."

"What has happened, Lolo?" inquired the Count, struck by the tone of her voice.

"I have had a quarrel with my mistress; practically I have been turned out of the house."

"But my dear Lolo, this is a very serious matter. What could have brought it about?"

"It has been coming for a long time," she answered; "that is why I tried so hard to get an engagement on the stage. I never liked my mistress, and from the first she hated me. She treated me badly enough before I made your acquaintance, but since then her treatment of me has become simply intolerable. She would have got rid of me long ago had she not felt that I was too good a workwoman to lose. My going out last Sunday with you seems to have irritated her very much, and the tension between us culminated

to-day in a scene. She called me all manner of offensive names, and told me to leave her house. I obeyed at once."

"Lolo, what will become of you now?"

"I have no idea," she replied. "I first went to see my mother's brother, Johann Lazarus; he is a parson, as I think I told you; I informed him of what had happened; he said that he did not wish to hear anything more about me, and closed the door in my face. I left his house with the intention of throwing myself into the river, but lost heart, for it seemed so pitiful to have to die so young. I really do not see what else I can do than spend this night in the open air."

"You are quite mad to talk like this, Lolo," said Count Klinkenstein, becoming really anxious for his fair companion's sake. "You must not do anything so foolish. Is there no one who could take you in for a few days until you are able to obtain some other situation?"

"I know of none," she replied.

Count Klinkenstein was at a loss to know what to suggest. He could give her money, it was true, and send her to an hotel; but even there she would be unprotected and exposed to many dangers. He could not very well ask her to come to his rooms; that would be enough to ruin her character for life, and he felt an interest in her and sympathy for her in her present difficulties which prevented him from wishing to do her any harm. He walked on in silence by her side revolving in his mind every conceivable plan, but there seemed to him to be no satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

It was a beautiful evening, warm and cloudless, with scarcely a breath of wind ; one could just distinguish through the trees the crescent of the rising moon. To the west over Charlottenburg the sky had assumed a delicate apple-green tint such as is not unfrequently the case in northern climes when the days are long in summer. Against this faint remaining light of a midsummer sunset the stars were hardly visible. Count Klinkenstein and Lolo wandered arm in arm through the winding paths of the Thiergarten, speaking but little to each other, he deeply occupied in searching for some means of delivering her from her present difficulties, she tired out with the anxieties and worries of that day, allowing her feelings as a relief to yield to the soothing influence of the calm and beautiful evening. At that late hour there were few passers-by who could disturb them in their meditations.

"We have walked a good deal," remarked Lolo to her silent companion. "Let us sit down awhile ; it is such a beautiful evening that we may as well enjoy it quietly."

They sat down on a bench. Not far off were Kroll's Garden and Summer Opera, and the Count and Lolo could, from where they were seated, occasionally catch the sound of some well-known tune as the doors of the theatre were pushed open by persons entering or going out, and hear mellowed by the distance the more coarsely executed music of the brass band in the garden.

"I could so enjoy this evening with you," said the Count, "if I were not worried with anxiety as to what will become of you."

"How strange our destinies are," she remarked; "they seem to depend so much upon small events, upon unexpected meetings, upon occurrences which at the time often appear of such little moment. I cannot help thinking to-night how different my position might have been if my father had not died so prematurely. Perhaps at the present moment I might be a famous dancer as he hoped, or an actress on the high road to fortune. All that has been changed by an unforeseen and unexpected death."

"What will become of you?" sighed the Count, as he drew himself nearer to her and tried to console her in a timid sort of way.

"The despondency I felt seems to be passing away," she replied, "and hope seems to be reviving in me. It is foolish in my present position to build castles in the air, but somehow I cannot help doing so."

"What can I do for you?" asked Count Klinkenstein, getting closer to her and laying his arm on the back of the seat. "Is it not possible for me to realise your hopes? I would so like to be able to do something for you, Lolo."

She said nothing, but turning her face towards him she thanked him with a look. The Count was sitting so close to her that in the movement of turning her head her hair brushed over his face. Their eyes met, and never before had hers seemed to him so limpid and beautiful as that evening in the twilight with the faint rays of the moon shining upon them through the trees. The vicinity of this lovely girl sent a thrill of emotion through Count Klinkenstein such as he had never before experienced, and as generally happens

upon such occasions he found that words failed to express what he felt at that moment.

"What are you thinking about?" he whispered into her ear.

"I hardly know what my thoughts are," she replied. "I feel to-night so much that I scarcely understand. It seems so strange to be sitting by your side, with the moon and stars shining above us, and the evening so lovely and still. It is almost like a dream."

"Why should it be a dream, Lolo?" said Count Klinkenstein, as he took his arm off the back of the seat, and put his hand gently upon her shoulder. "We are very living and real, there is no mistake about it. Do you know, Lolo, that I would like to be able to sit every evening by your side, as I am doing now; it would make me so happy if it could only be. I know you will not believe it; you will say that my words are meaningless phrases; that they are not intended to be taken seriously; that they have probably been addressed to many other girls before, and that every man who would find himself in my present position would talk in the same manner. Lolo, you are mistaken if you think so. You are more to me than I can tell. If you look unhappy, I am miserable; if I were to see you cry, I think I would go mad. Lolo, I must tell you everything to-night, I cannot keep it hidden any longer. I have been afraid to speak till now; but, Lolo, I have loved you passionately for a long while. I am ready to do everything for you; I would sacrifice so much to make you happy. You cannot expect me to do the impossible; I cannot marry you, for

you know the regulations of the army forbid it, but all I can do I will do. Lolo, will you be my wife in everything but name? Be mine, and mine alone; let me feel that I possess you, and that you no longer run the danger of falling into other men's hands. Let me be your friend, your protector, your true and devoted lover. I will labour to realise your wishes, your dreams, your hopes. Whatever my wealth can procure you you will have. Trust in me; I will not deceive you. Lolo, can you love me? can you love me ever so little? Speak but one word; say that you can, and I, for my part, will love you for ever and ever, and I swear, by God! that never woman shall come between our love to trouble it, to break it, or to make us unhappy."

What answer could she give to such a passionate appeal? He was a young and handsome officer, and he had been kinder and more attentive to her than any one she had known since her father's death. Why, then, should she not love him? Was it a crime to do so? She was destitute, and alone, without friends or relations in the world, and she felt the want of some one whom she could love, on whom she could lean, in whom she could trust. Here was a man to whom she felt attracted, offering to raise her from poverty to wealth, from misery to plenty, from practical slavery to independence and freedom. Why refuse such gifts? Why turn away from them? Merely because she was denied the name of wife! Could she not make that sacrifice in return for all that he offered to do for her.

Thoughts such as these passed through Lolo's

mind at that moment, but on these occasions feelings are stronger than thoughts, and decide our actions. She could not help feeling kindly towards the Count ; he seemed so kind and generous, and his words had such a sincere ring about them. No man had, as yet, tried to awaken love in her, and to whisper such passionate words into her ear. Lolo's nature was that of the artist which palpitates to every emotion ; how could she help being deeply moved listening in the stillness of the night to the words of love, to the ardent promises that her wishes should be his, that he would devote his life to her service, that he would love her for ever, that he would nurse her in sickness, and that death alone would part them ? Who will blame Lolo severely for what she did ? How many young girls put into her position would have resisted the charms of the situation and its surroundings ? What could Lolo answer to the Count's pleadings ? She leant back, giving way to her feelings, and said nothing. There are moments when to speak would be out of place, and when silence is more eloquent than words.

It almost did seem to them as if it were a dream ; it was so beautiful, so still, so silent ; they were alone, with no other human creature to watch them. From afar like a distant rumble came the sound of the carriages as they rolled through the Brandenburg Gate. Count Klinkenstein passed his arm round Lolo's waist, and he drew himself closer and closer to her till he could feel her bosom heave. For a time he was restrained by a feeling of timidity ; but soon unable to control himself any longer, and im-

elled by the desire to possess so beautiful a creature, he seized her in his arms and their lips merged into one long kiss, full of love and passion. At that moment like a pæan of triumph rose from Kroll's summer theatre the stirring notes of Aida's silver trumpets.

They left the bench on which they were seated, and hailing the first cab they met drove to Count Klinkenstein's rooms. Lolo experienced a feeling of relief that the struggle was over, that the irretrievable step was taken, that she had given herself for life to the man she had loved for some time though she had tried to delude herself into believing that it was not true. As they drove away there passed again before Lolo's mind the strange experiences she had undergone that day : her quarrel with her mistress ; her appeal to her uncle ; her rejection at his door ; then her lonely situation ; the momentary thought she had had of committing suicide ; then the walk in the Thiergarten, with the accidental meeting with the Count, and the strange finish of it all. The door of the house was reached ; the Count handed her out of the cab, then striking a match he entered the house, and going ahead bade her follow. As Lolo ascended the dark staircase she was seized with the same never-to-be-forgotten faintness which she had experienced years ago, when as a little girl she waited in the flies of the Victoria Theatre till the moment came for her to make her *début* before the public ; it was a strange feeling, a mixture of terror and joy, of anxiety and confidence, of hope and fear.

Count Klinkenstein knocked at his door, and his faithful servant Hans opened it at once. He ordered all the candles in the sconces to be lit ; and, as each of them was enclosed in a delicate rose-coloured paper screen, a soft and voluptuous light filled the room. Lolo had eaten little food that day, so the Count instructed Hans to bring wine, biscuits, and cakes for her, for she felt too tired and excited to touch anything else, and when it was brought he told his servant to go and to leave them alone. On his table lay a letter from his sister ; on other occasions he would have hastened to read it, now he left it unopened.

On a divan covered with a soft Persian carpet sat Lolo with her lover at her feet, and resting his head against her knees. Then they told each other their tastes, their hopes, their views of life, their past history.

" You shall have a house of your own, Lolo," said Count Klinkenstein, " and it will be a great pleasure to me to fill it with all things beautiful and lovely ; for I will often be there, and you will sing to me those songs which I like so much to listen to, and which first awoke in me the love I have for you."

" I will sing to you whenever you like," she replied ; " what a pleasure it is to me to know that I have got a means of drawing you to me, and of keeping you by my side."

" You need not fear, Lolo ; my love for you will never change," answered the Count, as he rose and sat by her side. " You will never require charms or love potions to bring me to you."

" May that be true ! " exclaimed Lolo, looking straight into his eyes, in which sincerity was writ large ; and then she added, " If you prove false there is but one course left open to me."

" What is it ? " inquired the Count.

" To kill myself," she replied.

So far Lolo had succeeded in keeping her feelings under control, but the long struggle had weakened her strength of resistance, and suddenly she felt herself carried away by such a violent rush of emotions that the only relief possible was to give vent to everything she felt. She threw her arms round the Count's neck, and sobbing aloud, " I love you,—love you more than I can tell ! " with all the frenzy and passion of an Italian girl, she smothered him with kisses more ardent than he had ever known.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE day after he had lost all he possessed at the Jockey Club, Count Immersdorf was sitting in his room much depressed. He was not a man who was easily disheartened, but the circumstances in which he now found himself were such as to make the most courageous despair. He had practically no fixed income, and he had lived of late by betting and gambling, and on occasional presents from his aunt, the Countess Schnitzel, whose husband held a High Court appointment. It was a principle of his never to pay a tradesman as long as he could help doing so, and his unpaid accounts were therefore numerous and large ; but that was a matter of minor importance compared with the fact that he had been reduced to raising money under great disadvantages, and that several of the bills he had signed would fall due in a few days, and that the Jews who had advanced the money were not persons who were likely to be put off with fair promises, but would certainly have him declared a bankrupt if the money were not forthcoming at the proper time. This would cause a pretty scandal in Berlin society, and he would be compelled to retire to some foreign colony, which did not suit his tastes by any means, and to live there

on the pittance which his family might deign to give him. He owed the money-lenders about £5,000 ; not a very large sum perhaps, but still a bigger one than Count Immersdorf could meet. His uncle by marriage, Count Schnitzel, had pulled him out of his difficulties more than once, and Count Immersdorf knew perfectly well that it was useless to apply to him again for assistance ; he had borrowed money also from most of his friends and acquaintances, and as he never paid them back they had already, for a long time past, turned a deaf ear to all further appeals on his part. Herr Schlangenbeck, who had made use of him in more than one questionable racing transaction, and who had helped him out of several of his financial difficulties, had of late had a quarrel with him, not without cause. Herr Schlangenbeck had sent one of his horses to run in a race in England. It was a remarkably good horse ; but as it had judiciously lost every race for which it had run in Germany it arrived in England with a poor reputation, and the odds laid against it were very considerable. Count Immersdorf had been sent to England by his friend with a large sum of money to back this horse ; all went so far well that the horse won the race, but Herr Schlangenbeck's expectations of having made a large sum of money were doomed to a certain amount of disappointment, for the Count, being at that moment in very serious financial difficulties, thought it a good opportunity to put himself on his legs again. Instead of taking 25 per cent. of the winnings, as had been agreed between them, Count Immersdorf put half of them into his pocket, and presented the other half

to Herr Schlangenbeck on his return to Berlin. As might have been expected, a scene took place between them, as all the explanations Count Immersdorf deigned to give were that he had been unable to obtain from the bookmakers the odds which appeared in the newspapers.

Count Immersdorf certainly did not suffer from scruples of conscience, and he had therefore assiduously studied the art of palming cards and of turning up the one he desired. It was an art, he thought, which might be useful to him in an evil day ; but he was too shrewd a man to run the risk of losing his social position to make use of such proceedings except in the direst necessity, and so far good fortune had enabled him to find some other way out of his difficulties without resorting to cheating at cards. On the present occasion there seemed, however, to be only two courses open to him ; to emigrate to America—an idea which was exceedingly distasteful to him—or to remain in Berlin, and by dexterously helping fortune at cards win at least sufficient to pay off the most pressing debts and get a new start. To commit suicide as Lieutenant von Schmälting had just done seemed to him the most ludicrous of all endings for a gambler, and a defiance of the gambler's creed that runs of bad luck do not last for ever and that fortune must inevitably change.

Count Immersdorf passed the afternoon occupied with these meditations and unable to make up his mind. At one moment he thought it best to escape to America, and there carve out for himself a new career ; then he would recall to mind the pleasant life he led in Berlin, the many attractions of the place, the

races, the club, the theatres, the women, and he felt that he was not strong enough to break away from them so long as he saw a possibility of his remaining there. It was evident, he would argue to himself, that if he took to cheating at cards there was every probability that as he was dexterous it would never be discovered ; and, moreover, he only intended to use his talents upon rare occasions, when the stakes were heavy, for he did not think it advisable to have recourse to cheating only to win paltry sums. If it came to the worst and he was discovered, he would of course have to leave the country ; but then he would be in no worse a position than if he had gone to America from the beginning.

A gentle and timid rap at the outer door of his apartment woke him from his reverie.

“ Who can it be ? ” he said, starting up. “ I do not expect any one at this hour, and would much rather be left alone. As my servant is out, I suppose I must go myself and see who it is.” He hesitated for a moment ; but as the knocking was repeated somewhat louder he boldly went out and opened the door. He found a little man, whose physiognomy at once pronounced him to be a Jew, standing on the landing. It was Moses Jacobsohn, the seller of old clothes.

“ What brings you here ? ” inquired Count Immendorf roughly, very angry at having been disturbed
“ You had better look sharp, and go away.”

“ I am sure that you do not mean what you say,” replied the Jew, with a sarcastic smile on his face as he thrust his umbrella between the door so as to prevent the Count closing it. “ When a man is drowning,

he does not reject even a straw which is held out to save him. Suppose I am that straw, would you object to being saved through me?"

"I do not understand what you mean," replied the Count, feeling very much annoyed at what he considered the brazen-faced impudence of this intruder. "I advise you to disappear quickly, for I feel in the humour to knock you downstairs."

"How foolish some men are, to be sure," muttered the Jew. "They cannot see who are their friends, and even adversity will not open their eyes. May I ask you, Count, to let me in?"

"Certainly not, you confounded blackguard!" shouted Count Immersdorf, seizing the ragged-looking little Jew by the arm and thrusting him violently back.

"You call me names now because I have an honest calling," retorted Moses Jacobsohn. "You may repent of it, Count. I am not a swell like you; but I have some friends, and you have none."

"How dare you talk to me in this way!" stammered the Count, white with rage. "I shall send for a policeman and have you locked up."

"They would not come," replied the Jew, laughing; "they have other things to do than to protect the honour of a man who cannot pay his debts. You are ruined, Count, and you know it. You have not got a brass farthing in the world, and yet you give yourself airs as if you were a Rothschild. Be sensible, and let me come in, for this is no suitable place for discussing delicate matters in, and I have an important proposal to make to you."

Count Immersdorf was so astonished at the extraordinary coolness of this individual that he remained speechless, and felt a sensation of terror creeping over him at the thought that his visitor might have discovered something in his career which was disreputable, and so placed him in his power, else how could a dirty little Berlin Jew dare to address a gentleman and a count in the language he had used? The door was ajar, and as the Count did not answer, Moses Jacobsohn pushed it open and boldly walked into the Count's room with his cap on his head. There was nothing left to do but to submit ; besides, a feeling of curiosity to know who the strange little man was and what his errand might be seized the Count. He closed the outer door of his apartment and re-entered his rooms.

"Fellow, what is your name?" he inquired, as he watched with amazement the little Jew seating himself in one of his arm-chairs.

" You would like to know my name?" said the Jew. " I am sure that it will give you but little pleasure to hear it. My dress will tell you that I am not a duke, a count, or a person of noble blood according to your ideas. I am an individual of no consequence ; I am quite humble, lowly, and unknown ; but as you seem to take such an interest in me, I will present myself. I am Moses Jacobsohn, seller of old clothes."

" Then the sooner you return to your old rags the better it will be. A gentleman's sitting-room is not a suitable place for such as you, with your smell of the alley and the low beershop."

Moses Jacobsohn replied in the calmest manner possible. "Count, as your sense of smell is so delicate I will do my best that it may not be offended. I will try and suffocate the odour of my clothes. I see there are some cigars on the mantelpiece ; with your permission I will take the liberty of smoking one." He rose deliberately from his seat, and, having selected what he considered the best cigar, he proceeded to bite off its end and spat it out into the fireplace ; then he struck a match and lit it, and returned to his comfortable arm-chair, in which he stretched himself, crossed his legs, and threw his head back as he began with a look of voluptuous contentment to puff rings of smoke into the air, and to watch them rise in ever-extending circles to the ceiling. No one who has not been in Berlin and become aware of the intense hatred which exists there between the Jewish community and the rest of the population will be able to understand the satisfaction which Moses Jacobsohn felt in worrying and insulting his prey, for he was quite convinced that Count Immersdorf would not be able to resist the temptation he was about to lay before him.

Neither of them spoke for a few minutes ; then the Jew, laying his cigar aside for a time, addressed the Count as follows,—

" My dear Count, you must think it very strange of me to walk into your room without any introduction, to sit in your comfortable arm-chair, and to smoke your best cigar. You can see that I am a sane person, and I flatter myself that I am no fool ; you may therefore infer that if I venture to take liberties,

as I confess I know I am doing, it is owing to the fact that you are no longer in a position to kick me out. We are equals, do you see? Nay, do not get angry. My dear fellow, before I leave I hope to have brought you to my way of thinking. Well, I repeat it, we two at present are very much on the same footing in this world. You have the barren title of count and no cash ; I am but a vendor of old rags, but I have a little money. The one position, it seems to me, balances the other. You agree then, we are equals."

"I do nothing of the sort," snarled the Count. "I should like to be informed as to what you know about my affairs. You are an ignorant, vulgar scamp. If you have only come here to make offensive remarks, there is the door ; I advise you not to wait till my servant returns, for you will then surely receive the biggest hiding that was ever administered to human creature."

"I am not afraid of your servant," answered Moses Jacobsohn, with a hideous grin ; "he is an excellent friend of mine, and he will not return for some hours. Do you suppose I would have come up here if I had not known that you were alone? What I have come to say is for your ears, and not for other people to listen to."

"Are you a fiend?" exclaimed Count Immersdorf, retiring towards the door, so as to be as far away as possible from his uncanny visitor.

"You need not be alarmed, Count," replied the Jew, with evident satisfaction at the Count's uneasiness. "You ask me what I may know about your affairs. I

will tell you, Count. You have no sources of revenue, no prospects of inheriting anything, no occupation whereby you could earn an honest livelihood, no power of borrowing anything more. Last night you lost all that remained to you gambling at the Jockey Club ; a very agreeable occupation, no doubt, for an idle, impecunious man. Then there are the following bills out against you." Here Moses Jacobsohn took a piece of paper out of his pocket and began consulting it. " £500 owing to Aaron Levy, due in three days ; £400 owing to Rafael Goldschmit, due in six weeks ; £800 owing to Judas Cohen, due in a month ; £200 borrowed last week from Jacob Birnbaum, and to be repaid in a few days. There are several more which I know of. Shall I read them all out to you ? Total owing, so far as I know, £3,850, in return for £2,950 actually advanced to you. My dear Count, you know as well as I do, that you are neither in a position to pay the larger nor even the smaller of the above sums. Are you convinced now that I know something about your affairs ? "

" Who told you all this ? " inquired Count Immendorf, very angry that his private affairs should be so well known to a dealer in old rags. " If you have bought up all the bills which are out against me, I can assure you at once that you have made a very bad bargain, and that I have no intention of paying a single penny of what I owe ; and if you choose to make it impossible for me to remain in Berlin you had better understand at once that I will leave for America with all the possible cash I can raise, and I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have at

least succeeded in cheating you, impudent scamp of a Jew, of your money."

"Go on, my dear Count," replied the Jew ; "give relief to your feelings by letting forth a stream of backguard language and insult ; I do not mind it ; it does me no harm. You think I have bought your wretched bills ? How foolish of you to suppose that I would give myself the trouble to knock at the door of a beggar. You are astonished that I am so well informed about your private affairs, but amongst us Jews there exists a solidarity which you Christians lack ; we help each other in every possible way, and we are therefore strong and influential though our numbers are small ; but you Christians fight and quarrel amongst yourselves, and do your best to cheat each other, so you grow weak and have to bow before us."

"If you have come to give me a lecture," shouted the Count, in reply, "you have come to the wrong place. I shall continue to gamble and to borrow money as long as I can, and in spite of all your solidarity of which you boast, nothing will ever change my opinion that you Jews are the most despicable and offensive creatures in this world."

For a time Moses Jacobsohn answered nothing, but continued to puff his rings of smoke into the air ; then, after contemplating the Count attentively for a few minutes, he said,—

"You judge yourself rightly, Count ; you will continue to be a gambler, and I fancy a reckless one, to the end of your life. You will also periodically fall into money difficulties such as you find yourself in

now ; but what, under those circumstances, you will not always find is a man who will come to you uncalled for, and who will offer you a reasonable plan by which you may extricate yourself from your unpleasant situation."

"Sir," replied Count Immersdorf, in a tone which sounded almost civil, "if the object of your visit is to propose to advance me money I shall certainly feel myself under a very great obligation to you. As you seem to know everything about me, it is no use my hiding from you that I am for the moment in very great pecuniary difficulties. I am prepared to sign any bill you like. I know that I will have to make considerable sacrifices. Sir, please mention your terms."

A sardonic smile passed over the Jew's face as he listened to the Count. " You were born shrewd enough, my dear Count ; I can read it on your face ; but truly gambling has blunted your wits. Do you suppose that I am so foolish as to give myself the trouble to come here to lend you money when I know that you are unable to meet your outstanding liabilities ? Moses Jacobsohn's principles are those of our ruler, Prince Bismarck. *Do ut des* is my motto. Give me or do something which I want, and I will find you the money."

" How duncish is a man to understand what you mean if you speak in riddles !" said the Count, evidently irritated at the disappointment of the hope which the Jew's language had for a moment raised in him that he was going to be offered a loan even at an exorbitant interest.

"Count, I am a philosopher," answered Moses Jacobsohn, throwing himself back in his chair ; "I have studied men and things, and I have noticed that in a complex society such as exists in civilised countries, the higher a man's social position is the more cowardly does he become. Nay, my dear Count, be quiet ; do not think that I am making these remarks as a personal accusation against yourself : I am not talking of physical cowardice ; I know well enough that you aristocrats make brave officers, and that you will let yourselves be killed out of foolish vanity. I was not born a Hercules, as you see, and therefore I have but little regard for the bravery which comes of a strong fist, or merely from stolid stupidity. What the upper classes are lacking in is moral courage ; they are so much under the influence of the customs, habits, traditions, and prejudices of their class that they dare not offend these ; besides, they have developed such a passionate longing for ease, comforts, and luxuries that rather than do without them they are prepared, especially if the world is ignorant of it, to step over, to a certain extent, the arbitrary boundary which jurists have erected between the things which may be done with honour and those which are forbidden under threat of punishment. The philosopher laughs at such dividing lines ; he can conceive the two extremities of possible actions ; they are like the ends of a chain, palpable and visible, but he denies the right of any one to draw a fanciful line dividing them. Why should the division be more on one side than the other ? Can the eye detect a difference in the value of the links ? No ; all we can

say is, that the one link appears to be nearer to one end than to the other."

"All you are saying now is merely talk, and has no practical value," replied the Count. "You said that if I did something for you, you would procure me money. I should like to know what it is."

"The mere mention of the word money makes you run after it as if you were a fish and saw an attractive bait. Count, you must have a little patience. I will tell you all in due time. You agree with me, then, that in the upper classes this moral cowardice exists : let us unite and work this golden mine ; the profits will be great, and all the capital we require is a little determination and a little courage."

"Why do you beat about the bush in this irritating manner ?" asked the Count. "Tell me in plain language what you want done. For my part, I do not see how money is to be made out of other people's cowardice, unless you expect me to turn highwayman, and to stop men and women on the high road by presenting a loaded pistol at their heads and demanding their purses. I am not yet reduced to becoming an assassin or a thief."

"You will not become an assassin ? You decline to become a thief ?" exclaimed Moses Jacobsohn. "Who required of you that you should ? Why must you pervert the meaning of what I say ? I talk to you in a figurative sense, but you understand everything in a concrete one. Discharge firearms at people ! Madness ! But you can present a pistol at a person's head loaded with a more deadly charge than powder and ball, and which is more effective though it makes

no noise. To handle this weapon is dangerous, and requires some courage. Have you got it, Count? That is what I want to be assured of before I proceed."

" You doubt my courage ? " cried the Count, his face growing flushed at the idea that an impudent little Jew should have doubts upon the subject. " I have been an officer in the army ; I went through the French war, I have fought my duels, and no one ever dared to say that I have flinched."

" Count, the eyes of the world were on you then ; you could not do otherwise. I would not give that for such bravery," and the Jew snapped his fingers as he said it ; then rising from his seat he walked straight up to Count Immersdorf, and looking him in the face, inquired, " Would you cheat at cards, Count ? "

The Count staggered back astounded at the abruptness of the question, and stammered something in reply which was inaudible. With intense interest Moses Jacobsohn watched the effect which his question produced, and with that keen instinct he possessed of reading men's characters he saw at once where lay the weak point in the Count's armour.

" Count Immersdorf," he continued, " perhaps you have not as yet cheated at cards ; but you cannot deny that in your financial distress the idea of doing so has occurred to you."

" Thoughts are not deeds," replied the Count, very confused and red in the face. " You have no business to make insinuations like this."

" I do not blame you for your thoughts," said the

Jew ; "when we fall into distress it would be foolish to be too squeamish as to the means which we may have to employ to get out of it. Every man has a right to help himself best he can. What I want to know is whether you have got the courage to cheat at cards in an emergency, for if you have you are the man I want ; you will then not shrink from doing what I expect of you."

"Tell me quickly what you expect of me, for I am getting tired of this long interview." Then Count Immersdorf began walking up and down his room with his hands behind his back, evidently much agitated. He continued doing this for several minutes, then suddenly turning round he shouted at his visitor, "Jew, give me money, and I am prepared to do a great deal for you."

"That is right," replied Moses Jacobsohn, with delight, for now he felt sure of the success of his mission. "I knew we would agree. I will not ask you to cheat at cards ; I will not expect you to do anything mean : be easy on that point. Our operations shall be noble. Every day men commit sins which the law cannot reach, and they escape unpunished ; but we shall hunt out these crimes ; we shall pursue their authors ; we shall levy a fine upon them, and the fine which we shall levy will be our reward."

"Are we to become detectives ?" inquired the Count, somewhat astonished. "I never heard that it was a profitable profession."

"You do not understand what I mean," replied the Jew. "Before I explain it to you in clearer words

give me your word of honour that what passes between us you will never divulge to any one else."

"I do," answered Count Immersdorf, without any hesitation, for he was getting exceedingly interested in the Jew's proposal.

"I will trust in you, then," said Moses Jacobsohn ; "sit down, Count, and I will tell you my plan. Accept it or reject it, as you please ; but if you reject it you have promised never to breathe word to any man that I have made you this proposal. Remember that if you break your word there are men who will revenge me. I will now explain. I assume to start with that in the upper circles, especially in that narrow clique which we call Court Society, many things are done which, if their existence were only known to the world, public opinion would strongly condemn. I believe I am not far wrong in supposing that there may be persons of high position even guilty of such dark deeds that, were they only suspected of having committed them, they would be at once hooted and driven out of society. Why should these men and women be allowed to draw a veil over their past ? I say, let us prick holes through the veil and spy the skeleton it covers. Such a discovery has a money value, for here comes into play what I explained to you before, the moral cowardice of the upper classes. Who will not pay rather than be exposed ? Who will not prefer to lose a few hundred or even a few thousand pounds rather than be deprived of the charm of retiring to bed at night with the esteem of the world ringing in his ears ? Do you see, Count, what I expect of you ? You are well acquainted with society ;

you have relations with the great world ; you must hear and know much. It is your knowledge I want ; you must be the key which will open the cupboard, and which will enable us to threaten to let out the skeleton unless we are paid to keep silence. I have no pity for persons who commit evil actions, and are afraid of facing the consequences of their acts. What a golden harvest lies before us if we will only work this business well ! ”

“ It is a hazardous game to play,” remarked Count Immersdorf. “ In plain language, you propose that we should blackmail society. Well, I have no objection to the idea in theory, and it undoubtedly promises to be a very profitable business ; but before I engage myself, I must see clearly that the danger run is not excessive. You have as yet told me no details of your scheme. I do not know whether you have thought them over. What will you do for assistance supposing one of the first persons you try and blackmail declines to pay, and puts the detectives on our track ? ”

“ My dear Count,” replied the Jew, “ do not imagine that I have laid a crude project before you. I have thought over most of the difficulties which we may have to encounter, and I feel certain that we will run but little risk. You cite the case of a man refusing to pay ; I do not believe that such a case need arise, and I will tell you why. We shall not drive a man to desperation ; we shall never ask so large a sum in return for the service we render in keeping silence as to make it possible for our victim to hesitate for a moment between the disadvantage of paying or of

being exposed. Before we send in our demands to any one we must first carefully consider the state of his purse, his character, his weaknesses, his ambitions, the realisation of which might be jeopardised by our exposure. If we take all these points into consideration the money will be paid without a murmur. Count, I look to you for the necessary information. Will you give it? Your duty will be to make a list of the victims, and to note down the amount which you think they are able to pay. The threatening letters will be composed by us two; others, whose names you need never know, and with whom you need never come into contact, will run the danger of collecting the money. Half we gain I shall bring to you as your share. Are you satisfied with the terms?"

Count Immersdorf had been leaning on the table, listening with intense interest to the Jew's words, and when he ceased speaking he buried his head in his hands for a few minutes to think over his answer. It was a critical moment in his life; he was a ruined man, and now he was offered the choice between honesty and poverty in a distant country, or, by the commitment of a disreputable action, the possibility of remaining in Berlin, among his friends and acquaintances, in comfort and ease. The temptation was great; after all, what he was asked to do did not expose him to very much danger; it was safer than cheating at cards, and, in his opinion, far less disreputable, for he argued to himself that if an individual commits an action of which he is justly ashamed, he deserves to be punished. Then why should his

punishment not take a form advantageous to oneself? His thoughts wandered back to the Jockey Club ; to the exciting nights he had passed there round the gambling tables ; to the ups and downs of fortune he had known ; to the pleasant afternoons spent on the racecourse at Hoppegarten. The Jockey Club was to him as the candle is to the moth ; the fascination of the place, and of the life he led there, was so strong for him that he felt himself unable to break away from it as long as there was a possibility of his not doing so. He raised his head, and, addressing Moses Jacobsohn with a perfectly calm voice, he said. "I am ready to do what you want."

"Count, I knew you would accept my proposals," replied the Jew ; "you are no fool, that one can see. As time is getting short we had better proceed to business at once. Tell me the names and the crimes of some of our swell people, and fix the price of our silence." He drew out a pocket-book, and, pencil in hand, waited attentively for the names which the Count was about to mention.

"How many do you require?"

"I should think three would be sufficient for our first trial," answered the Jew.

"Very good," replied the Count ; "then the first name I would suggest would be that of Prince Zakuski. He holds a high position now, and no one suspects him of having ever done anything dishonourable in his life ; yet there is a blot on his fair name which few know of besides myself. He is very rich : he could easily pay £2,000."

Count Immersdorf went up to a small safe which

was let into the wall, and opened it with a key which he carried attached to his watch-chain. Inside there were rows of shelves packed with innumerable letters, papers, and documents neatly arranged in packets bound with red tape. He took down one of the packets, and, pulling out a letter from it, said to the Jew,—

“There was a time when Prince Zakuski was a comparatively poor man ; that was before the occurrence of that fortunate accident for him when his cousin, the head of the house, tumbled one day off his horse while drunk and broke his neck. He then succeeded to the large family estates in Silesia and Posen, and became an important person and a pillar of the State. Many years ago we were at Nice together ; he was then an impecunious person, with little chance of ever becoming a prince, for his cousin was young and had the intention of getting married. I used to see a good deal of him in those days, for we were both honorary members of the ‘Cercle.’ He had lost heavily at cards, and was practically ruined. One night he was caught cheating at cards. The persons who saw him do it said nothing at the time, but reported his conduct to the committee, who, to avoid the scandal of expelling him, wrote to me this letter which I hold in my hand, in which they begged me as his friend to inform him privately that he must absent himself in future from the precincts of the club. I reluctantly undertook this painful duty ; he was not even aware that he had been discovered, so you may imagine into what a state he was thrown by the message I brought him. He

talked wildly about killing himself, for his honour was gone, and he had no money. As we sat together a servant brought him a telegram. He opened it, gave a scream, and fell to the ground in a dead faint. I picked up the paper, and read this message from the solicitor of the family : ‘ Your cousin fell off his horse yesterday, and expired a few moments after. You succeed to the family estates and to the title. I await your instructions.’ When he recovered he threw himself on his knees and begged me never to breathe a word of what he had been driven to do in a moment of desperation. I promised, but times change. We cannot read the future ; now I am poor and he is rich. Let him pay therefore to prevent me doing what he did.”

“ That man will make no difficulties,” remarked the Jew ; “ but it seems to me you let him off very easily at £2,000.”

The Count did not answer ; but, seating himself at his writing-table, drafted the following letter :—

“ Your Serene Highness will no doubt remember an event which occurred many years ago at the ‘ Cercle ’ at Nice. It is my painful duty to have to recall it to your memory. I was a member of the committee which decided that it was satisfactorily proved that you had cheated at cards. The written evidence which was tendered is in my possession. Since those days I have fallen into poverty and you have become rich. I grieve to say that I see myself compelled to appeal to you for help. I must ask you to send to the person, whose name and address you will find

written on a separate piece of paper, the sum of £2,000. As perhaps you may be inclined to reject my request, though I feel certain that your kindness of heart will not allow you to do so, I think it necessary to inform you that if the money is not paid within a reasonable time or any attempt made to put the police to discover who I am, I will publish the documents I possess in some French newspaper. It is always a satisfaction to us in France to see a German of your Serene Highness's rank and position held up to public contempt and ridicule."

"That will do," said the Jew, taking the draft and folding it up. "I will get it copied out and sent. Let us now proceed to our next subject. What do you say to blackmailing the Prefect of Police? There are so many scandalous stories current about him that if you happen to know anything particularly disreputable about him we ought to be able to raise a little money as the price of our silence, especially as at this moment he has the intention of marrying the rich widow of a merchant. The idea of mulcting the Prefect of Police amuses me very much."

"I am acquainted with one episode in his life," replied the Count, "which is not much to his credit, and which would make the public laugh if they heard of it. When the Emperor was shot at some years ago there was much comment in the press at the absence of the Prefect of Police from Berlin at that moment. On inquiry it proved that he was in London on leave of absence, but no satisfactory explanation was ever given as to what had taken him to that

city at so inopportune a moment. I gave myself the trouble to unravel the mystery, which turned out vulgar enough. The Prefect had taken a fancy to an English girl, who had been performing for some time at Renz's Circus ; he became so infatuated with her that he followed her to London, where he spent a very pleasant fortnight in her company. While abandoning himself to her embraces he received the news of the attempt on the Emperor's life ; he hurried back to Berlin, but the mischief was done which due vigilance might have avoided. The world was informed that the Prefect had been to London to study the English police system. I came across that girl during one of my journeys to England, and she told me of her adventure with the Prefect, and without a scruple sold me his letters to her. They are funny reading, I assure you, written as they are in a mixture of German and bad English, with here and there foolish verses expressive of his undying love for her, with frequent promises of money and jewellery, and interlarded with suggestions of the most depraved immorality. The bundle of letters is in that cupboard ; we can threaten to send them to Rochefort's *Intransigeant*. I can imagine what pleasure he would take in serving them up with caustic comments of his own."

"Draft the letter," said the Jew, laconically. "We have no time to lose. What do you think he is worth?"

"He is not rich, but I should say that he would willingly part with £500 to escape the ridicule to which he would be exposed if these letters were

published." The Count took up his pen again, and wrote as follows :—

" DARLING OLD GOOSE,—

" Have you quite forgotten me? There was a time when I did not find it necessary to ask you for anything, but now it is a long while since you have written to me or sent me anything. I suppose you no longer care for me, but that is no reason for forgetting one's old friends. I happen to be in want of some money, darling, so I must apply to you for it. Please pay the man who writes this letter for me the sum of £500, or I will see myself compelled to sell the letters you wrote to me. A friend of mine tells me that there is a Frenchman of the name of Rochefort who would willingly give a large price for them. He edits a newspaper, and says funny things in it. I hope my little request does not put you out in any way, but silk stockings and petticoats are so expensive, and you know you gave me a taste for wearing them. Will you be surprised at hearing from me? I never forget my friends, though you seem to have quite forgotten your old love,

" COEUR D'OR."

The Jew took the draft, cast an approving glance at it, and then placed it in his pocket-book. Turning to the Count, he said: "Now one more will do, if the redeeming price is good. Rack your brains, Count, and make another good selection."

Count Immersdorf did not answer at once, but began again to pace his room in a state of great mental

agitation. "It must be done!" he exclaimed, stopping suddenly. "Away with scruples; we cannot be choosers once we embark upon this sort of business."

"Who is it to be this time?" inquired the Jew, quite indifferent to the Count's agitation.

"My aunt, the Countess Schnitzel," replied Count Immersdorf.

"Indeed! That is a surprise. What has the good lady done?"

"Nothing serious," replied the Count; "but she is foolish, enthusiastic, mad about music and musicians. She has lately shown a great predilection for an impostor of a creature who wears long hair, and thumps upon the piano. I have seen her in a moment of enthusiasm kiss that man after he had been playing a piece on the piano with more than usual dash. I do not believe matters have gone further than that, but it is no reason why we should not threaten to expose her criminal intimacy with this man to her husband. I know her well; she will do anything to avoid a scandal, and her general conduct has been sufficiently foolish and unguarded to give an appearance of truth to the statement that the musician is her lover. She certainly will not show the letter to her husband, and I think it more than probable that she may consult me as to what she should do. I will give her good advice. She has lately come in for some money, so we will put her ransom at £2,000."

The Count drafted the letter to the Countess Schnitzel, and handed it to the Jew.

"We have done excellent work this afternoon," remarked Moses Jacobsohn, as he closed his pocket-

book and replaced it into his breast pocket. "In a few days I hope to have collected the money; I shall bring you your share without fail, and when I come with it I hope, Count, that you will receive me with your usual civility, and not forget to offer me again one of your excellent cigars. Good-bye for the present." Then Moses Jacobsohn shuffled out of the room.

Count Immersdorf retired into his bedroom, and having dressed himself very smartly went out. With a jaunty air he took a stroll down the Unter den Linden eyeing the women, and greeting his acquaintances in a jovial manner as if he was on the best of terms with the world, for he felt certain that he had again succeeded in saving himself from imminent shipwreck.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Countess Schnitzel was a lady of quite forty years of age ; her husband, a most worthy man, held a high and responsible post at court, but unfortunately his age was nearly double that of his wife. His friends assured you that he possessed every virtue, but, all the same, he was hardly the man a lady would select as an agreeable life companion, for the Count did not know what it was to be frivolous, and even when he declared himself highly amused he never laughed, but merely indulged in a severe smile. Nature had not been very lavish of her favours on the Countess ; she was anything but good-looking ; her face was thin, scored with lines, and of that type which belongs to the nervous and excitable woman ; she had very protruding teeth, which produced a far from pleasing effect, and she was small in stature, with a figure which was commonplace, not to say ungraceful. Though the Countess was therefore unable to shine in society as a beauty, yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, she had succeeded in acquiring a distinct position in the Court Society of Berlin, and to surround herself with a large circle of admirers through what her friends were pleased to call her brilliancy of intellect. That the Countess loved her husband it would have been difficult to believe, con-

sidering their difference of age and character, for the Count was a prosy old gentleman, without a particle of enthusiasm or poetry in himself, whereas the Countess was, what is called in German, *schwärmerish*, and in French, *exaltée*; he disliked going out into society, while she was fond of it; and he possessed one great virtue—immense common sense, whereas she was absolutely destitute of that quality; but as the Count allowed her to do pretty well what she pleased, so long as he was left in peace, and allowed to retire to bed at an early hour, instead of being compelled to remain in the drawing-room to entertain her guests till the early hours of morning, they managed to live together fairly happily, and without quarrelling. The Countess looked up to her husband as she would have done to her parents, or to her guardians; and he, on his part, treated her more like a daughter than a wife; and he had never attempted to disturb the Countess's illusions by making her the mother of a child. It is almost a law of nature that if a woman of imagination is not blessed with children she will certainly try to forget her loss by selecting some other object on which to vent her affections. Under the circumstances some ladies have been known to take to religious devotions, others to spiritualism, or kindred occult sciences; some more simple minded ones have even been known to take to dogs and cats. The Countess Schnitzel had selected Wagner's music as her craze, and very soon this craze developed into a blind, unreasoning admiration and passion for the composer and everything which came from him. He was always spoken of as the 'Master,

as if he were the saviour of mankind, and his portrait was hung up in a recess of her boudoir with a *prie-dieu* in front of it, so that the room had quite the appearance of being an oratory. Though the Countess was not lacking in intelligence, she was still an exceedingly foolish woman. Any one who dared to criticise her idol's life or his works, or who declined to accept either as absolutely without blemish, was looked upon by her with the same kind of aversion that a bigoted Ultramontane Roman Catholic would look upon a heretic. Her salon naturally became the rendezvous of all the fanatical admirers of Wagner. There of an evening one would see the rooms crowded with long-haired, spectacled creatures : politicians, littérateurs, journalists, poets, pianoforte players, and musicians, some good, mostly indifferent. Nor must one forget to mention many young men who wished to get into society, and who therefore made it their business to flatter the Countess, and for whom she in return felt a more than motherly solicitude. It mattered little to the Countess what a man's views might be, whether Conservative or Radical, whether those of a bigoted Churchman or of an atheist, whether he was moral or immoral in his life, her doors were thrown open to all provided they accepted the Wagnerian creed, and were ready to burn incense at the shrine of the Master. Surrounded as she was by such men, who, pleased at finding a fashionable house where they could meet, were not niggardly in their praises of the hostess, she allowed herself the pleasant illusion that she was throning like a queen over the intellectual world. On the evenings she

received company it was her delight to lie on a soft couch surrounded by her admirers, and to listen from time to time in the intervals of conversation to fragments of Wagner's operas played on the piano by one of her *protégés*, or if she felt in the humour for it she would start a discussion on the meaning of some "Leitmotiv," or listen while she assumed an amorous and languishing air to some professor explaining the mystical loves of Tristram and Isolt, or developing some inane theory about the relation of colours to music, or else the conversation would revert to the inevitable Schopenhauer, and the company would discuss learnedly about his philosophy, though few of them had so far found the time to read his works. In rooms luxuriously furnished with Eastern carpets and hangings, where bric-à-brac of inestimable value was strewn on the tables and brackets, or locked up in delicately inlaid cabinets, where the atmosphere had the enervating warmth of the air in a hot-house and seemed to be laden with perfumes, the Countess, and those who cared to be in her good graces, posed as pessimists and persons for whom the world was out of joint, and with the conceit of the true Wagnerian thanked God that they were not as other men, barbarians and ignorant persons, but that they were capable of soaring into the regions of the supreme philosophy.

The chief of the Countess's musical *protégés* at this time was a young man of unhealthy appearance, and who wore his hair exceedingly long, which is considered in Germany to be the outward and visible sign that a person poses as an artist. When in society he would put on a dreamy and far-off look so that

his neighbours might be led to believe that he was contemplating visions which were denied to more commonplace individuals. He was known by the name of Albertus Magnus ; but as a matter of fact he was born in Scotland, and his real name was Albert John Mackay. He undoubtedly possessed a very remarkable talent for pianoforte playing, and at an early age he had been sent to Germany to perfect himself in that art. There he became an enthusiastic admirer of Wagner, and so before long the Countess's doors were thrown open to him, and he became quite a lion in the small society accustomed to assemble in her salon. But it was a sore point with the Wagnerians that a person who possessed such undoubted musical talents should be a foreigner, and especially an Englishman, for it was acknowledged beyond question of dispute that in the art of music nothing good could issue from that island. His name was at once changed to that of Albertus Magnus, as having a more artistic sound than Albert John Mackay, but that was not enough ; so all wits were set to work to discover another nationality for him. The Countess remarked one day that there was an extraordinary likeness between the features of her *protégé* and those of the late lamented and famous violin player Alexis Sewitzki. That was a clue on which to work ; portraits and photographs of the great violin player were consulted, and they seemed to give a satisfactory result ; then inquiries were set on foot, and it was actually found that the mother of Albertus Magnus, while travelling on the Continent, had made the acquaintance of Alexis Sewitzki at a German bathing-place ; the dates did not quite tally

with her son's age, but that was a matter of little consequence, for, as they said, if there is proof that the mother met the great Alexis in a certain year, there is none to show that she had not met him often before. All parties interested were satisfied with these discoveries, and soon it began to be whispered in Wagnerian circles that though the remarkable young pianist, Albertus Magnus, might be a Scotchman by the law of nations, yet by the law of God he was undoubtedly a compatriot of Chopin. This delicate little matter having been settled, there was nothing left for the young Albertus Magnus to do but to pose as a man of genius, and to lay claim to being the only possible successor to Liszt.

That evening the Countess's salon was more than usually full. Albertus Magnus had just finished playing on the piano one of Liszt's difficult transcripts from Wagner, and the usual buzz of admiration and gross adulation followed as a matter of course ; the ladies pretended to go into ecstasy over the artist, and he, passing his fingers through his hair with a movement which was intended to mean, "This has been a great strain on my mind," stretched himself back in his chair with an unutterable look of exhaustion on his face. The Countess leant over her *protégé* and kissed his forehead. At that moment Count Immersdorf entered the room.

It was not often that the Count showed himself in his aunt's drawing-room. He was essentially a man of the world, and the society which he met there was far from being to his taste, and bored him intensely. He was fond of the ballet, operettes, horse-racing, and

gambling, and these seemed to him to supply quite sufficient sources of excitement for sane people, and he had the supremest contempt for those persons who posed as philosophers, because they were learned in book lore, while they remained absolutely ignorant of the real world. For him the babble of a ballet-girl at supper was infinitely more interesting than the long-winded and abstrusely worded dialogues between Wagner's heroes and heroines, and when he was taken to see the ride of the "Walkyren" he simply remarked that the horses on the stage were wretched screws. He had made up his mind, however, to visit his aunt on this evening for the very good reason that Moses Jacobsohn had informed him that the letter would be presented to the Countess on that night, and he wished to be present to judge of the effect it would have upon her.

"Is it really you?" said the Countess, in her mincing way, when she caught sight of her nephew. "I am so surprised and delighted, Wilhelm. You should have been here a moment earlier to have heard how divinely Albertus played on the piano."

"As you tell me so, my dear aunt," he replied, "I suppose I must acknowledge that I have incurred a great loss by not having been here a little earlier; but all the same, I do not think I possess enough musical taste to appreciate the pianoforte playing of so remarkable a genius." Count Immersdorf noticed with much satisfaction that his aunt had placed her arms round the neck of her *protégé*, and it would not have been difficult to make the world believe that they were already a pair of lovers.

"Poor man!" exclaimed a matronly looking lady, addressing Count Immersdorf with an air of pity. "You confess that you have no taste for music? How miserable your life must be!"

"You are quite mistaken, Countess," retorted Count Immersdorf to the lady who had apostrophised him; "I succeed in amusing myself fairly well."

The lady in question was the wife of one of the foreign ambassadors, and she had lately been converted to the creed that the world was only to be regenerated through Wagner's music. Like all converts, she developed an exaggerated zeal for the cause, and as she was a lady of rank and position, she thought it necessary to take under her protection a young pianist; she also made the remarkable discovery in her fortieth year that she possessed poetical talents, and every morning her unfortunate *protégé* received from her a batch of verses which he was expected to set to music.

"You really find subjects to amuse you, Count?" inquired the ambassadress, in a tone which implied incredulity. "The lower orders who are uneducated and barbarous may find a distraction in vulgar things, but how can a man of education like yourself be satisfied with anything in this world?" Here the matronly looking lady turned up her eyes and put on the miserable look of a soul in torment.

"I am apparently not so difficult to please as you are, Countess," replied Count Immersdorf; "I can find plenty of amusements in this world, especially if my pockets are full of money."

"You are indeed to be pitied, my dear Count," she continued. "I should like to know what pleasure a

man can really find in this world if his ears are closed to the divine message which music brings."

"I will tell you, Countess," he answered at once. "There is betting on horses, an amusement which is far from being uninteresting; there are ballet-girls and actresses who sometimes turn out to be a source of much entertainment; there is also gambling, the most exciting of all things; then, with your permission, Countess, I will mention love-making to women, and sundry other exciting though enervating pleasures."

Having had enough of the ambassadress's conversation, Count Immersdorf turned his back upon her and joined a group of men who were listening with marked attention to a learned professor who was discoursing about the philosophy of Wagner.

"All the misery in this world is due to that accursed principle of eating flesh," exclaimed the professor, waving his arms and assuming the attitude of a prophet addressing his disciples. "Without the bloodless diet, how can we have health and beauty of mind and body? How can we expect to possess that sensitiveness of soul essential to the proper appreciation of a work of art? Feeding on blood makes us ferocious; to it is due the spirit of militarism, that curse of the modern world; and vivisection, that modern desire to inflict pain on animals. The pure heart and keen intellect of that great genius Richard Wagner enabled him to grasp this vital principle; without sensitive natures there is no art possible; where we have no art we have barbarism. Richard Wagner in his works, in his writings, in his music,

has pointed out to you the path which leads to salvation, and more than any other man he has laboured for the regeneration of mankind and the world, therefore let us cry in the words of one who has studied the Master ; look up ye men born of dust,—look up to the sunny heights ! There in holy solitude sits Plato,—there sits Kant,—there Schopenhauer. See !—There they are the solitary geniuses of mankind !—Powerful,—like unto giants ! But towering over them all is the genius of Richard Wagner ! Hail to thee, Plato !—Hail to thee, Kant !—Hail to thee, Schopenhauer !—Hail to you, geniuses !—But thrice hail to thee, Richard Wagner !”

After listening for a short time to this sort of thing, Count Immersdorf turned away in despair, and went and sat by himself in a corner of the room, for he had to wait until the important letter had been delivered to the Countess. The time seemed to him to pass very slowly, but at last the door opened and a servant entered bearing a letter on a tray. The Count rose and approached near to his aunt. There was no mistake about it : he could see that it was the important missive. The Countess took the letter, and asked if there was a reply. The servant answered that the bearer had said there was none and had left immediately. She put the letter down on a little table which was near and continued her conversation with Albertus Magnus, who was seated by her side on the sofa. Count Immersdorf could not help feeling violently agitated ; he longed to know what effect the letter would have on his aunt, and he was much annoyed that she did not open it. Presently, Countess

Schnitzel looked at the envelope, and remarked, "I do not know this handwriting. What can it be?" Then addressing herself to the persons who were near her, she said, "Excuse my opening it," and tearing open the envelope she pulled out the letter and began to read it. She read it through ; then over and over again in an excited manner ; suddenly she turned pale and, giving vent to a loud cry, fell back on the sofa in a faint. Count Immersdorf was immediately by her side, and stooping down he picked up the fallen letter and put it into his pocket. Much commotion was caused in the room by this unexpected incident, and as usually happens on such occasions everybody crowded round the prostrate Countess to see what had occurred and to give advice. Count Immersdorf had to make use of some strong expressions before his aunt's guests understood that their presence was no longer desirable, and so one by one they began slowly to leave the room. The usual remedies were applied, but it took some time before the Countess recovered consciousness, and when she did she found herself alone with her maid and her nephew.

"Where is the letter?" she inquired at once.

"You dropped it when you fainted," replied Count Immersdorf very low, so that the maid should not hear. "I picked it up at once ; no one has seen its contents but myself. Send your maid away, for I must talk to you about this matter."

The maid was sent away, and then the Countess cried out in a paroxysm of anguish, "It is an awful calumny ! Who could invent such things about me ?

Who can believe such things ? Oh ! Wilhelm, save me ; tell me what to do ! It is too horrible ! ” Then she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

Count Immersdorf pulled out the letter, and, while pretending to read it carefully, he watched with satisfaction the effect it had produced upon his aunt. “ This is a very serious accusation,” he said ; “ and one that is more than likely to be believed by most persons.”

“ Oh, do not say so ! ” sobbed the Countess. “ I swear it is not true. The world is not so wicked as to believe such a story of me.”

“ The world will believe anything against a pretty woman,” he replied. The word pretty made the Countess look up with surprise, for she was not accustomed to such flattery, and expected it least of all from her nephew who was of about her own age, and whom she had known ever since he was a child. “ My dear aunt,” continued the Count, “ you must confess that you have not been very discreet in your conduct. This letter accuses Albertus Magnus of being your lover ; I do not for a moment believe such a monstrous accusation, yet you cannot deny that you have exposed yourself to that suspicion. He is always with you ; you almost seem to worship him ; you patronise him most publicly : can you deny this ? To-night I accidentally drop in, and I find you with your arm round his neck, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that you should put it there. People are not charitable, and I am certain that if it were once seriously hinted that this musician

was your lover, everybody would believe it. You have been so very indiscreet that there is much evidence which tells against you. I have heard it asserted that you have even kissed him in public."

"I may have done so in a moment of enthusiasm," answered the Countess, plaintively ; "but I meant no harm when I did it. Who could believe that I would fall in love with a mere boy?"

"Ladies have strange tastes," remarked her nephew ; "I do not think that the fact of his being a boy will make people less inclined to believe that he is your lover. But to return to the letter ; do you know the handwriting, and have you got any suspicions as to who might have written it ?"

"I do not remember ever having seen the handwriting before," said the Countess, examining the letter closely ; "nor am I aware of having any enemies who would be capable of extorting money from me by spreading calumnies with regard to myself."

"It is a very strange business certainly," remarked Count Immersdorf, putting on a grave look, "and £2,000 is a very large sum to pay to make the authors of this letter keep silence. Do you not think that it might be as well to show this letter to your husband ?"

"Never !" shouted the Countess ; "promise me never to mention it to him ; men of his age so easily get strange ideas into their heads. No one must know that I have received this letter. Oh, Wilhelm, do suggest some way of getting me out of this difficulty ! Shall I put the matter into the hands of the police, and beg them to keep it very secret, and to try

and discover the authors ? Oh, save me, Wilhelm ! do ! " She clasped her nephew's hands, and again burst into tears.

Count Immersdorf did not answer at once, but he put on a look of deep thought, and when he began to talk it was in a hesitating manner, as if he feared that the advice he was about to give would prove unacceptable. " My dear aunt, the person to whom you should turn for advice in this present difficulty is no doubt your husband ; he is a man of experience ; he knows the world, and the ways of society ; he is the natural and best adviser whom you could consult ; and I feel certain that he would succeed in finding a satisfactory solution to this horrible business ; but, as you decline to refer to him, I really am at a loss to know what to suggest. To my mind there are but three courses open to you. I will enumerate them separately. First, to place this letter into the hands of the police, and to request them to do their best to discover the authors of it. This course has, I think, but little to recommend it. I have not got much faith in the efficiency of our detective service ; and I do not believe that the police will ever discover who wrote this letter. Moreover, if you enter upon this course you will have to inform your husband of it, which you do not wish to do ; and as the matter is sure to leak out before long, you will see the newspapers commenting upon so extraordinary a case. Much scandal is sure to collect round your name, therefore I should advise you to avoid the police. The second course which is open to you is to put the letter into the fire, and to boldly face the consequences which are threatened. I would not recommend you to

do this, and I will tell you why. You might say that very likely the threats would not be carried out ; now I can hardly bring myself to believe that the persons who wrote this letter are not resolute in their intentions of extorting money from you. I feel perfectly certain that if the money is not paid they will write letters to your husband and your friends, giving, what many persons will believe, conclusive proofs of your infidelity with Albertus Magnns. No doubt your husband will not believe the story ; yet many of your friends may do so, for people are apt to say that where there is smoke there is a fire, and, I must repeat it again, your conduct lends colour to the accusation. The third course which is open to you is, to pay the money ; all things considered, I think it is the most satisfactory one for you to follow. Two thousand pounds is, I admit, a large sum, yet peace of mind and a name without blemish are also worth something, and to preserve them most people would be willing to sacrifice a good deal. If you want my candid opinion, my dear aunt, it is this—pay the money."

"Do you really think so ?" asked the Countess, in a piteous tone.

"I know of no other alternative," he replied. "Are you unable to raise this sum without your husband hearing of it ?"

The Countess hesitated for a moment before she answered. "Wilhelm, I have lately inherited a little money. It is, however, all invested. How am I to sell shares without my husband hearing of it ? I do not know what is to be done !"

"Do not trouble yourself about that, my dear aunt,"

replied the Count ; “ he need never hear of it. Give me sufficient shares, and I will get them sold to the very best advantage ; and if you like I will also see that the money is paid over to the authors of this letter.”

“ Oh, do ! ” exclaimed the Countess ; “ it would be so kind of you ;—it will save me ! No one then need know of this matter but us two. I will send you the shares to-morrow. You will settle this matter for me, will you not, Wilhelm ? and I shall never hear of it again.”

“ Very good,” said the Count, with a mournful look ; “ I will sacrifice myself, and settle this business for you ; but I would willingly see you put it into the hands of men of more experience than myself. As I undertake it, however, you may rest assured, my dear aunt, that I will do my best for you. If your husband should by any accident discover that you had parted with certain securities, you might say that you had sold them for the benefit of some poor artists, or say, for Wagner’s theatre at Baireuth. He will probably believe it at once, and not make any further inquiries. I can see you are tired and excited ; you had better retire to bed. I will burn this letter, as it is of no further use to you, and if found might be very compromising.” The Count took the letter and threw it into the fire.

“ You have saved me, my dear Wilhelm ! ” exclaimed the Countess, throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him. “ How lucky it was that you were here to-night. I do not know what I would have done if you had not been here. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude.”

The Countess Schnitzel retired to her bedroom, and Count Immersdorf, having put on his coat and hat, and lit a big cigar, sauntered home pleased with himself and all things, for he now knew that in a few days he would be the owner of at least £1,000.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR several days after Olga Zanelli had become his mistress Count Klinkenstein did his best to avoid meeting Baron Zerbino and Sydney Gray. He felt ashamed of his weakness, for he had repeatedly assured them both that he had no intention whatever of doing the girl any harm. He knew that when what he had done became known, he would be exposed to much chaff, if he were not severely blamed by both his friends ; all the same, he felt pleased that the thing was done, and that no stepping back was possible, for he could no longer hide from himself the fact that he was deeply in love with Lolo.

One day as he was hurrying back from drill he turned sharply round the corner of a street and ran up against the Baron and Sydney Gray. That such a meeting was sooner or later inevitable Count Klinkenstein knew well enough, so that he was not quite unprepared to answer the questions which were likely to be addressed to him.

“ Hallo ! ” shrieked the little Baron, in his shrillest voice. “ Is it you, Klinkenstein ? Why, where on earth have you been all this while ? It is a week since I saw you last, and every time I called at your rooms your servant answered that you were out and not likely to return for some time. I was too discreet

to press the point. I suppose you have been harbouring some actress, or perhaps a ballet-girl for the last week or so?" Here the Baron gave Count Klinkenstein a nudge in the ribs with the end of his elegant cane.

" You are entirely wrong in your suppositions," replied Count Klinkenstein, rather piqued at the way in which he was greeted. " My dear Zerbino, you ought to know me well enough by this time to be aware that it is not my habit to make my rooms a rendezvous for women of bad character. If my servant told you I was out it was evidently because I was not at home. All your insinuations are base and unfounded."

" A servant who is ready to tell lies for his master's sake, and shows intelligence and discretion, is a most useful person," answered the Baron. " I never accused you of extending the hospitality of your rooms to women of bad character ; I drew the line at actresses and ballet-girls, which does not exclude the possibility of your having received a prolonged visit from a duchess or a countess."

" It is indeed very flattering to me that you should think that such exalted persons throw themselves into my arms. You are getting exceedingly foolish, Zerbino." Then the Count began to walk at a quick pace, as if he wanted to get rid of the little Baron.

" Hallo, Klinkenstein !" shouted Baron Zerbino, trying to keep up with his friend, " why on earth do you want to walk at this pace for ? I see you are put out at being chaffed ; never mind, Klinkenstein, I did

not mean any harm, and if it pleases you, I will believe that you have spent the last week in meditation. Popes have been known to become sometimes a little frivolous ; why, then, should a Count Klinkenstein not become serious for a time ? ”

“ I am not angry,” replied the Count ; “ I was only annoyed at your insinuations that I spent my time in running after women, and in general debauchery. I am more serious than you imagine.”

“ Serious ! ” exclaimed the Baron, looking at the Count and catching hold of his arm to prevent him from walking too fast. “ What interpretation do you give to that word ? The dictionaries define it, I believe, as gravity of disposition, the reverse of volatile. Your general conduct is no doubt quite in keeping with that definition.”

“ I am not trying to defend my conduct,” answered Count Klinkenstein. “ I have no doubt done many foolish things ; but all I will say is that I sometimes do think seriously before I act.”

The three friends continued walking for a time without saying anything, but silence was the last thing which suited the Baron ; and as his curiosity had been keenly excited by the Count’s manner and the answers he had given, he was bent upon discovering what had been the cause of the unexplained absence of his friend during the last week ; so presently he re-opened the attack.

“ Now that you go in for solitude and meditation, I suppose you have quite forgotten your once beloved Olga ? ” said Baron Zerbino.

The mention of Lolo’s name sent the blood into

Count Klinkenstein's face, and turning towards the Baron he answered him sharply. "I will not hear anything said against her; do you understand me now?"

"Whoever would wish to say anything against so beautiful a creature?" inquired the Baron, rather astonished at the way in which Count Klinkenstein had spoken.

"If you did not say anything, you had at least the intention of saying something nasty about her, so I stopped you."

"It is very kind of you to read my thoughts," retorted the Baron: "you are getting amazingly clever, my dear Klinkenstein; but I do not think you have as yet succeeded in obtaining the proficiency of a Cumberland in the art of thought-reading. I never say anything nasty about women, least of all about a young and pretty girl."

"So much the better," replied the Count; "for I give you distinctly to understand that if ever I hear a word spoken against her I shall not hesitate to knock that man down, whether it be in the street or in a private house."

"You are becoming quite a second Don Quixote," remarked Baron Zerbino, rather amused at the Count's earnestness. "But take care, my dear fellow, that you do not bump up against the windmills, for there are plenty of them about in the world, and they have mighty strong arms."

"You are quite right, Klinkenstein, to stand up for the girl," said Sydney Gray, who had so far listened to the conversation without saying a word, but who felt

a certain admiration for the Count's chivalry ; " I only hope she will prove herself worthy of it."

" I am certain she will," replied the Count, taking Sydney Gray's arm ; " she is a noble girl. I believe you have never seen her ; you will judge for yourself some day."

The Baron was not to be so easily beaten in his researches, so he presently asked the Count : " Have you seen your Olga of late ? Not so very long ago you used to pay her one or two visits every day. Have you given up that amusing entertainment ? What is she doing now ? "

" I am not her guardian," replied Count Klinkenstein. " If you want to know anything about her go to her shop and inquire."

" That is just what I have done," answered the Baron, triumphantly. " I have made inquiries, and I was told you had not been there for a week, and that Olga Zanelli had been sent away."

" Then if you want to know where she is find it out for yourself, for I do not mean to be bothered with any more questions," replied the Count, rather sharply.

They had reached the corner of the Unter den Linden and the Friedrichstrasse ; here the Baron declared that, as the Count seemed to be in the sulks, and did not like to talk, it was better for them to leave him. He said good-bye and walked off. Sydney Gray was about to do the same when Count Klinkenstein held him back, and said : " I would like to have some talk with you, Gray ; can you spare me a few moments ? My rooms are close by. We might go up there."

" Certainly !" replied Sydney Gray, who all along

had felt that there was something weighing on his friend's mind.

They reached the house and went upstairs. The Count's servant opened the door and let them in, and then Hans discreetly left them alone.

"I suppose you have got into a mess, and are in search of advice?" remarked Sydney Gray, as he sat down in one of the Count's comfortable arm-chairs.

"Yes," answered Count Klinkenstein dryly, as he went to the window and looked out of it with a sheepish expression on his face, as if he were at a loss to know how to tell his story. After a prolonged period of silence he turned round suddenly and said to Sydney Gray: "I must tell you all; do not blame me too much; what you expected has occurred."

"I suppose you are alluding to the Italian girl?" inquired Sydney Gray.

"Yes; she has become my mistress."

They both remained silent for a time, then Sydney Gray remarked: "That is the way those acquaintanceships generally end. My dear Klinkenstein, I am sorry to hear of this; but it is no use crying over spilt milk. What are your intentions now?"

"I cannot marry her," he replied at once; "it is impossible for a person in my position to do so, however much I might like it. Before she gave herself away she knew of this. I propose to give her all the money I can; I love her: you will not think this very surprising when you have seen her. I shall surround her with every luxury; I shall try and make her happy. What more can I do for her?" Then he proceeded to relate the events which had taken

place the evening he had met Olga Zanelli in the Thiergarten.

"It is a strange story," remarked Sydney Gray, who had listened to the Count's narrative with deep interest. "I do not suppose that you can marry her, that would only make matters worse. If you want my advice, I will give it you, though I do not for a moment expect that you will follow it. You have always told me that she wished to go on the stage ; it is a natural desire on her part, for she is a woman, and has been born and bred in Bohemian circles. You can settle money on her so as to render her independent ; have her well taught ; push her once she is on the stage—for there are many ways in which you can be useful to her—and if she has talent, as you say she has, she ought then to succeed. But I strongly advise you to put an end to your liaison with her as soon as possible ; it can do neither of you any good, and no one can tell how it may end ; besides, your family will want you to marry some day, therefore keep yourself free. Break with the girl, and the sooner you do so the better."

"You do not know what you are talking about," answered the Count, excitedly ; "I have no intention of getting married. She shall not go on the stage, because I do not wish her to be exposed to temptation. She is to be mine, and mine alone ; and you would not advise me to give her up if you had seen her."

There was no answering such arguments, so Sydney Gray kept quiet, and taking a book off the table he began to read it. He felt that his friend had done a foolish thing, of which he would repent sooner or later,

but that at the present moment no words would persuade him of it. He still hoped that Count Klinkenstein's fancy for this girl would pass away before any serious harm had been done, and that he might yet succeed in breaking the liaison between them. His best policy was not to oppose the Count, but to wait until he had grown tired of his companion, and then to step in as a mediator between them and suggest some arrangement which would be satisfactory to both parties.

Count Klinkenstein began pacing his room, muttering to himself, and evidently much incensed at the suggestion that he should give up Olga Zanelli. "I love her, do you understand me?" he suddenly shouted at Sydney Gray. "I do not believe you have got a heart; you are nothing but a cold-blooded philosopher. Your advice may be excellent in theory, but it is exceedingly bad in practice. When a girl has given herself to you, and sacrificed everything she has for your sake, you cannot turn her out into the street when you have done with her, and when you feel that she is no longer so attractive to you as she was. You may call me a fool and an ass if you like, but I shall not give you the opportunity of calling me a brute. I shall never love any one else, I am sure of that. I have promised her that she shall be my wife in anything but name, and I do not intend to deceive her, not even to please you. Give her up! Why, I should prefer to jump out of that window."

"My dear Klinkenstein, I do not for a moment say that you are not sincere in your belief that you love her, but men are so often deceived in such things,

especially when they are young and at their first love. You cannot fight against the great laws which govern the world, or the prejudices of the society in which you will have to live. You are neither of you made to be man and wife, and sooner or later you will find that you will go through the same phases through which other men have passed. You will love her ardently for a time ; then will come a period of satiety, which will be soon followed by one of indifference ; after that you will get to hate the person whom you will look upon as a bond and a chain to your freedom."

"Never!" answered the Count ; he would have said more, but his words were stopped by the sound of music in the adjoining room.

"Who is there?" inquired Sydney Gray.

"It is Lolo. Come and see her, it will be the best way of convincing you that I am not likely to get tired of her." He went up to the door and opened it gently. "May we come in?" he said.

Olga Zanelli was at the piano. She turned round on her music-stool, and when she saw a stranger walk in she rose.

"Lolo, I must introduce to you Sydney Gray, a secretary of the British Embassy; he is one of my best friends, although he has just advised me to give you up."

"But you will not do it, will you?" she said to Count Klinkenstein, giving him a kiss.

"Of course not, Lolo ; when Sydney Gray knows you, he will no longer give me the same advice. He is a cold-blooded creature, like most Englishmen, and always lets his common sense govern his actions.

You must pardon him, Lolo ; the poor man has never been in love."

She stretched out her hand to Sydney Gray, who muttered some excuses for the advice he had given. She looked at him for some time, and then she said : " We shall be the best of friends ; I like your face, for you look so honest. I am sure you really thought the advice you gave Edward was for his good. You were his friend, and you did not know me ; if he had followed it, I would have died."

Sydney Gray was greatly struck by the charm of Olga Zanelli's looks and manners ; he had expected to find a pretty girl of low extraction and vulgar ways, and instead of that she seemed to him particularly sympathetic, with the ease and *savoir faire* of a lady. He remained for a long time looking at her and saying nothing.

" Do you care about music ? " she inquired.

" Very much," he replied ; " Klinkenstein has often spoken to me of your talents. You sing Italian songs, do you not ? I would be so much obliged if you would let me hear some of them."

She took a seat at the piano and began to sing, as he desired, songs from her own Italy, and snatches from operas and operettes. Sydney Gray, resting his arm on the top of the instrument, fell into a reverie, as he contemplated the beautiful creature before him, and listened to her songs. Music has the power of recalling to sensitive natures the memory of every pathetic or sentimental mood through which they have passed in former days, and Sydney Gray's mind wandered back, as he listened to Lolo's voice, to Italy,

where he had often been—to the days of his boyhood spent in his home in the west of England—and to the wild dreams in which he had then indulged, that in after days he would lead a chivalrous life, and perform doughty deeds. He pondered over the strange meeting which had brought Count Klinkenstein and this girl together, of the charm and beauty of the whole thing, of their sincere and ardent love, and then he was seized with a presentiment that it could not end well, and that he was powerless to do anything to avert a calamity, for the force of destiny is too strong for man to contend against.

" You are dreaming," she said, as she looked up at him.

" Music always makes me feel sad," he replied ; then taking out his watch and looking at it, he made it an excuse that it was growing late, and so took his leave.

When he was gone Lolo came and sat near Count Klinkenstein ; leaning her head against his shoulders she whispered to him : " Edward, have you many friends as nice as this one ? He is the first one you have introduced me to."

" You will get to know them very soon, Lolo, and then you will be able to judge for yourself. By the way, Lolo, I have found a house which I think will suit you ; to-morrow we shall go and see it together."

A few weeks later Lolo entered into possession of the charming little apartment which Count Klinkenstein had selected for her use, and which he had caused to be entirely re-decorated and newly furnished. To do so he found it necessary to borrow money, and he found money-lenders only too ready to provide him with

funds. As he wanted the money at once he was naturally charged a high rate of interest, but that was not a matter which would make Count Klinkenstein hesitate for a moment, for he had no idea of the value of money, and when he was in want of it, as on the present occasion, he was ready to sign anything that was laid before him, provided the funds he required were supplied. He had very extravagant notions, and he did not think that his mistress could be suitably set up, or his promise to supply her with everything she wished for redeemed, without a preliminary expenditure of at least £5,000. Lolo never knew of the Count's money transactions, and he always assured her that his income was so large that what he spent upon her was but a trifle.

The house which had been selected was situated in one of those clean-looking streets in that new quarter of Berlin which has been built of late years to the south of the Thiergarten. It was a bijou residence, built in the French Renaissance style, only two stories high, crowned by a Mansard roof, and with a couple of fantastic-looking turrets at the angles of the house. The most charming feature of the place when seen from outside was the large expanse of clear looking-glass windows, such as is rarely seen outside of England. Count Klinkenstein, with his usual grand ideas, had thought it his duty to hire the whole house. It would have been small for a family, but for one person only it was more than sufficiently large. On the ground floor was the dining-room and the offices. The staircase was of white marble, and the hall, which was large and roomy, was paved with slabs of the

same material. Palm trees and broad-leaved plants surrounded a picturesque little fountain which spluttered its water into a large conch in which some gold fish were floating. The drawing-rooms on the first floor had their walls lined with pale-coloured silk embroidered with flowers, and were decorated in the style in vogue during the reign of Louis XV., and the furniture was in keeping with the decoration. Lolo's bedroom was large and bright-looking, the furniture was sumptuous, and the state bed had hangings of the richest brocade ; close by was her boudoir, and a bathroom lined with tiles and fitted with a delightfully big bath and every modern convenience.

Lolo moved into this charming residence as soon as it could be got ready for her ; she found there everything she could wish for, and her infatuated lover did not forget to supply her with horses and carriages, diamonds and jewellery, and it soon became known in Berlin that she was Count Klinkenstein's mistress. It was not without a certain sense of satisfaction that he would go to the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs at lunch-time to watch from the window Lolo driving past in her smart victoria, and to know all the while that his brother officers were nudging each other, and pointing to him with a look of envy which signified, " Is he not a lucky fellow to be the owner of the prettiest woman in Berlin ? "

CHAPTER XVI.

OLGA ZANELLI was in high spirits. She had always pined for luxury and artistic surroundings ; now she had them, and at the same time she was in love with the man who had procured her these advantages. Her life was now passed in one whirl of excitement. Count Klinkenstein had such an implicit confidence in his mistress that he put no obstacle in the way of her receiving any one she chose, and she therefore soon made the acquaintance of all his friends and acquaintances. Invitations to dinners, suppers, and artists' balls poured in upon her, and nearly every night during the winter season she could be seen at the opera or the play. She had been introduced to most of the leading actors and actresses, and they were not unfrequently invited to little suppers in her house, which generally terminated with music or singing, or even in improvised dances. Count Klinkenstein pushed her on to every sort of extravagance ; he seemed to have lost all control over himself, and the more she spent the more he was pleased. Every whim of hers was immediately gratified ; he was continually presenting her with new jewels ; her dresses came from Paris ; and if she gave a large supper he insisted on her ordering everything which was out of season. When the winter came he bought

her the most beautiful furs, and the first day the snow fell and lay on the ground a delightful sledge, built to resemble a swan, drove up at her door drawn by two black Russian horses. It was a surprise which Count Klinkenstein had prepared for her, and as the fleet horses skimmed over the snow pulling their pretty mistress wrapped in her furs quite a crowd would collect in the Unter den Linden to see her pass, and the famous sledge soon became the talk of Berlin. To Sydney Gray's remonstrances at his reckless expenditure Count Klinkenstein would reply : " What does it matter what I spend, or whether I have to borrow a little more or a little less ? My estates are large ; I have even expectations from my mother's family ; as long as Lolo is pleased I am satisfied. Life is short ; let us amuse ourselves as best we can without doing harm to our neighbour."

Lolo's little supper parties became quite famous, and invitations to them were eagerly sought after, for she was invariably pleasant to everybody, and she gave herself much trouble to select guests who suited each other. It is needless to say that she had innumerable admirers, not only among the younger men, but also among those of somewhat advanced age. There was a certain elderly duke, of French origin, approaching his seventieth year ; he was assiduous in his attentions to her, for according to him she was the only *femme chic* in Berlin, and the Duke's opinion was not to be treated lightly, for he was a connoisseur in such matters. Every night that a ballet-girl showed herself on the stage of the opera-house he could be seen in his box, elaborately dressed in a costume which

might have been in fashion at the beginning of the century, always wearing his white gloves, and having an ivory opera-glass hung round his neck by a black silk band. As soon as the ballet was over his Grace would retire, and wicked tongues reported that it was not always to his domestic hearth. Of nearly the same age as the Duke was his friend the Count de Bonmarché, a gentleman of foreign origin, who had settled in Berlin. Their tastes were similar,—the cultivation of frivolous æstheticism ; in other words, the patronage of ballet-girls and the collection of bric-à-brac. In physical appearance, however, they differed considerably from each other, for the Duke was a dapper little man, and still full of go and of belief in his power of making new conquests among the ladies ; whereas the Count had grown ponderous and heavy with age, and in appearance was not unlike the busts of Socrates which have come down to us, and, like that distinguished person, he was also a philosopher, for he trusted more to the length of his purse than to his personal charms to win for himself the affections of the fair but frail sex. When Lolo was at home in the evening the Duke and the Count would frequently drop in to take a cup of tea, and while the Duke chatted away with all the liveliness of a Frenchman, the Count, after having delivered himself of one of his oft-repeated stories, would gradually dose off to sleep in a corner of the room.

It has already been mentioned that Olga Zanelli had a cousin, Heinrich by name, who was the son of her mother's brother, the parson Johann Lazarus. He was a little older than she was, and in his youth

he had been a frequent visitor to the Zanelli household. Heinrich was destined by his father for the Church, and at the present time he was studying at the Berlin University. He had a very great aversion to the profession for which he was destined, but his tyrannical and pedantic father would listen to no remonstrances, so in a sulky and discontented mood Heinrich had to continue his study of Hebrew and the Bible. Heinrich Lazarus belonged to a class of individuals who are not uncommon in Germany. He was sentimental, a dreamer, over-educated in a wrong direction, all his knowledge being of an unwieldy nature ; he was ignorant of the world, knowing men only from books, careless of bodily health and physical strength; in appearance, puny, with drooping shoulders, long hair, and spectacles. He was an omnivorous devourer of quaint books ; he studied the philosophers assiduously, for like the Alchemists of old he was seeking for the philosopher's stone, longing to discover a system of the universe which would explain all things from questions of abstruse theology to the pressing social questions of the day. He felt the need of anchoring himself to some comprehensive system ; for the idea that there might be problems which mankind can only feel and not explain, and which should be approached with reverence and not with a tape measure to try and discover their altitude and profundity, was absolutely distasteful to him. Plausible systems are easy enough to build up, but it is more difficult to make all things fit into them, and dangerous to expose them to thorough tests. The German philosophers have ever been great adepts

in throwing dust into the eyes of their followers by the use of abstruse language, so that they should not too easily perceive where lay the flaws in their systems, as Heine wittily remarked when he said,—

“Zu fragmentarish ist Welt und Leben,—
Ich will mich zum deutschen Professor begeben ;
Der weiss das Leben zusammen zu setzen,
Und er macht ein verständlich System daraus ;
Mit seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrockfetzen
Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbaus.”

Heinrich Lazarus was not a person who was likely to make many acquaintances at the University, for he lived a very retired life, and he was exceedingly shy when brought into contact with people he did not know well. He had two friends, however, from whom he was rarely separated ; one was Ludwig Krause, the other Bernard Alder. They had been schoolfellows at the same gymnasium, and there was little difference between them in the matter of age. Ludwig Krause was a good-natured, good-humoured creature, with an immense capacity for drinking beer. No one could accuse him of possessing genius, but he had an undoubted talent for drawing and landscape painting, and he was studying at the Berlin Academy of Arts in order to qualify as an artist. Bernard Alder was a shrewd, pushing, ambitious person, of low parentage, and bent upon making a career for himself. He was studying at the University to become a barrister, and like most young men of his class he was an enthusiastic liberal in politics, not to say a democrat, and he thought he knew a great deal better than Prince Bismarck how Germany

should be governed. These three friends were continually together ; they lived in garrets close to each other, and fed at eating-houses where a meal could be procured for the sum of sixpence and a sumptuous dinner for eighteen pence. It was perhaps their dissimilarity of character which had at first attracted them towards each other ; Heinrich Lazarus dreaming Utopias ; Bernard Alder quite absorbed by practical politics and eager to engage in the fray ; and Ludwig Krause, who, as a "*Künstler*," had the hugest contempt for politics, and who would make the "*Bierhallen*" ring with his loud and merry voice.

After Olga Zanelli had been established in her sumptuous apartment she did not forget, in the whirl of the new life she was expected to lead, her cousin Heinrich, of whom of late she had seen but little, but who in the old days had been her constant companion. He had always expressed the greatest devotion to her, and Lolo had little doubt that had he not been so shy he would have made love to her even at that early age. She had always liked the gawky boy ; now he was the only member of her family she could see, and the only connection which remained between her present and her past life. Her father had been particularly kind to him, and she longed to see some one with whom she could talk of the days which were gone by, when she was poor and had to dance at the Victoria Theatre. She felt certain that though he might not perhaps approve of the irregularity of her present life he would not condemn her too severely. So she sent him a charmingly worded little letter on rose-coloured scented paper asking him for the sake

of old days to come and see her. He replied that he would call the next morning.

Punctually at the hour fixed Heinrich Lazarus timidly rang the bell at Olga Zanelli's house. A smart footman opened the door, and after severely scrutinising the shabby appearance of the individual before him, asked him what he wanted. He replied that he had been sent for by his cousin.

"Oh ! you are one of the family ; then walk in, please," said the menial with a certain contemptuous air, for he was accustomed to usher into his mistress's drawing-room princes and counts, and the smartest officers of the Guard.

Heinrich entered the richly furnished room, where the air was kept delicately scented by the fumes which rose from a silver burner on the table. Lolo, in a dainty dressing-gown faced with rare lace was reclining on a soft couch reading a book. When she saw him come in she jumped up, and, throwing her arms round his neck, to his great astonishment kissed him several times.

"We are cousins," she said ; "you cannot get over that, so we may kiss quite respectably ; besides, you are the only member of my family who deigns to see me ; have I not, then, every reason to be civil to you ?"

He was too startled to reply anything, so he sat down by her side and gazed at her in a sheepish sort of way, trying to realise that the beautiful young girl he saw so richly dressed was really his cousin Lolo with whom he had so often played.

"Am I changed ?" she inquired, laughing, for she guessed his thoughts.

" You are, indeed," he sighed ; for as a boy he had always secretly harboured the hope that some day he would be able to marry her. How could he have expected that she would ever become so rich ?

" What are you doing now ? " she asked. " Do you still propose to enter the Church ? You used to hate the idea so as a boy."

" I have to earn my living," he replied ; " I must follow some profession, and the choice is not great. I am not made for the army, and my father insists on my becoming a parson. What can I do but obey ? I should like to revolt ; perhaps some day I will." A flush of anger passed over his pale face, and he turned away from Lolo as the subject was distasteful to him.

" I suppose your father never mentions my name ? " said Lolo. " Does he look upon me as a lost thing ? "

" Yes," answered Heinrich, with some hesitation ; " but then, you know how severe he is."

" And do you think so too ? "

" No, Lolo ; you know I have peculiar views about marriage which my father and other persons, the world holds to be sensible, consider pernicious. I do not force any one to accept my views ; let every man believe according to his lights."

" You are a strange creature, Heinrich," replied Lolo laughing, and stretching herself back on her soft couch ; " you were always full of fantastic ideas about men and women ; making out that girls are angels, and endowed with every virtue ; I am afraid that we are more often possessed of a devil who bereaves us of our senses, and who can only be exorcised by a man we love."

"Are you happy, Lolo?"

"I should be very difficult to please if I were not. I love Edward, and he is kinder to me than I ever believed man could be. If I express a wish for anything he immediately does his best to satisfy it. He loves me passionately, and he is so pleased if I am in good humour and happy, that it would be wrong of me not to be so; besides, I owe him so much." Then her thoughts wandered back to that day when, alone and friendless in the world, she had applied for help and relief to Heinrich's father, and he had rejected her from his door as if she were already a defiled outcast.

"Lolo," said Heinrich Lazarus, "I am so glad you are happy; if he loves you and you love him what does it matter what the world says?"

"It would be better though if we could be married," she remarked, apologetically; "but there are so many difficulties in the way of it."

"Would you really be made any happier by that event?" asked Heinrich. "The world is so foolish, and so full of prejudices, is it not weakness on our part to give in to them? Love is the essential of married life; if we possess it, all is well with us, and we have no need to ostentatiously announce the fact to the world by going through the marriage form. Have we got no faith in ourselves; no faith in the duration of our love, that we must forge bonds to bind us together when the spirit which unites us is departed? It is a deception we practise on the world, and is not worthy of ourselves. Which is the greater sin, to love without marriage, or to marry without love? The world con-

demns in the one case and praises in the other. Is it not unjust to do so?"

"If the propriety of my conduct is ever brought into question," replied Lolo, with a smile, "I shall send for you to be my advocate; but what would your father say if he heard you express these views about marriage? Would he not be horrified?"

"He belongs to the old school of narrow-minded theologians," answered Heinrich, with considerable bitterness in his tone; "men who squabble and hate each other over the meaning of a word in the Bible, and miss the spirit of the New Testament; men who are cold and bigoted, devoid of feeling and sympathy for humanity with its many wrongs and sorrows and unsatisfied aspirations, its weaknesses and failures; men who think that propriety is the greatest of virtues; who believe that virtue and vice are divided by a well-defined line; who do not see that they are inextricably mixed in every human creature, and that often what they call a disgraceful action is but founded on the noblest aspirations. The men we are taught to look up to as our Christian leaders are the first persons who would throw stones at you, Lolo, because you are not married to Count Klinkenstein. You have sinned against the morality invented by man, so no mercy is to be shown to you; but had you sinned against the spirit of God's laws, had you been puffed up with that pride which makes you say you are saved and therefore better than your neighbour, had you been uncharitable and full of paltry meanness, had your actions been influenced by envy and jealousy of the prosperity of other persons, had you spread scandalous rumours,

true or untrue, about your neighbour, or had you even gone so far as to cheat him, you would have been pardoned. What delusions govern the world and make those therein miserable ! Why should we exalt one virtue to the detriment of the others ? Are the virtues which affect the body of more importance than those which affect the soul ? Marriage may be a noble institution ; chastity in woman may be a noble virtue ; but marriage is not everything, and chastity is not the only virtue, and its enforced existence may be purchased at too great a loss of the others." He continued for some time in the same strain ; then Lolo, who had been listening to him, half amused and half astonished, interrupted him.

" My dear Heinrich, you are evidently destined for the Church since you can deliver such fluent extempore sermons ; but if you serve up your present views to your congregation you will give rise to a scandal, and be very soon requested not to appear again in the pulpit. You should make allowances for people's deep-rooted prejudices ; they cannot all be founded on foolish sentiments. We cannot all be philosophers like you, and expose every one of our feelings to the test of cold logical criticism. I am a woman, and for my part I believe that to abandon oneself to natural feelings and impulses will more often lead one the right way than all the reasoning in the world ; and as for marriage, I must confess that I would willingly exchange my present state for it. It is no use grumbling, however," she added, laughing ; " and it was not to discuss matters of morality that I sent for you, my young theologian. I want you to render me a service."

"I will do anything you like," he replied ; "but I was not aware, Lolo, that I was in a position to render you any service."

"I will tell you, Heinrich, what I want you to do. You know when my father died we were left very poor, so we had to bury him in a simple grave with only a wooden cross over it. I was always unhappy about this. Now that I have money I have caused a marble monument to be erected over the graves of my grandfather, father and mother. I have received notice that it is now finished. Will you accompany me to the cemetery and see it ? I have not told Edward about it ; he did not know my father, so it would not interest him, and he would only be bored if I asked him to come with me and see it. If you would accompany me it would bring back to my mind the old days so much more vividly. I feel so changed with this new life I am leading, Heinrich."

He acceded to her request at once. Lolo rang the bell for her maid, and proceeded to her room to get ready to go with her cousin to the cemetery. Heinrich was left alone, and as he was kept waiting some time he not unnaturally fell into meditations over the strange experiences of life. To find Lolo surrounded by wealth and luxury, living in rooms more richly furnished than he had ever dreamed of, was the last thing he had expected. It was a great blow to him, for from his early boyhood he had kept alive the hope that one day he might be in a position to propose to his pretty cousin. He had resigned himself to work to enter an uncongenial profession mainly in the hope that it would procure him sufficient means to surround

her with all necessary comforts ; the height of his ambition was to obtain some cosy parsonage in the country, where they would have lived at their ease quietly and lovingly. But now all such hopes were extinguished ; he would never be able to give her the luxuries she now possessed ; she was happy in her present position, so he would do nothing to disturb it. The idea of entering the Church seemed to him now more distasteful than ever. He felt that he must find some occupation which would absorb all his energy, all his enthusiasm, all his hopes ; if he was debarred from loving a human creature, he would try and forget his disappointment by finding some object on which to pour all the love which he felt himself capable of. He thought that to labour to elevate the masses and to better their condition might be a noble object ; the coldness of the Lutheran Church repelled him.

As he was absorbed in these thoughts Lolo returned. She was simply attired in a woollen dress of dark colour, and she looked in it far more the Lolo of old than she did when lying on the couch in a dressing-gown covered with lace, and with high-heeled slippers, on the tips of which her initials were embroidered in gold thread.

"I have not ordered my carriage," she said ; "I do not wish any of my servants to know where I am going. Come, Heinrich, I am ready ; we will take a cab and drive to the cemetery."

They left the house together, and after a short walk they found a cab. They drove across the centre of Berlin, and then entered those interminably long and dreary streets on the outskirts of the town, in which

all the houses resemble each other, and are five or six stories high, and devoid of any marks which might show the individuality of the persons who inhabit them. After a long drive they reached the gates of the cemetery. It was partly surrounded by houses, and was situated in a squalid and hideous neighbourhood. The graves were mostly those of the poorer classes, and they were closely packed together, with little ornamentation on them except crosses of black wood, not unfrequently decorated with a certain amount of gilding. There were few flowers to be seen growing, and the trees were scarce and small, having been planted but a few years before. It was a melancholy and dreary place, as cemeteries in great cities usually are. Lolo remembered well the last time she had been here ; it was on the occasion of her mother's funeral ; a winter's day with the rain coming down steadily, and the priest hurrying through his work as quickly as possible, holding an umbrella in one hand and the prayer-book in the other. She would never forget that depressing funeral with only two mourners present,—herself and her cousin Heinrich,—for her uncle, Johann Lazarus, did not consider it consistent with his duty as a clergyman of the Evangelical Church to assist at the funeral of his sister according to the rites of the Roman Catholic religion, especially as she had committed the unpardonable sin of abandoning the pure doctrines of the Reformed Church to go over, on her marriage, to Romanism and idolatry.

The new monument was soon found. Although it was not large it seemed regal by the side of so many undecorated graves. It consisted of a flat marble slab

with a cross of the same material. The inscription was in Italian, and commemorated the fact that it had been erected by Olga Zanelli as a memorial to her father and mother as well as to her grandfather, who had died an exile after having fought for the deliverance of his native land. A victor's crown and a broken harp were carved in low relief on either side of the marble slab.

Olga Zanelli deposited on the grave a beautiful wreath which she had brought with her, and having knelt down she remained for some time absorbed in prayer. When she rose she cast a last look at the monument which she had erected, and then taking Heinrich's arm she strolled through the cemetery. It was early spring-time, and on the trees scarcely a bud was as yet visible. The grass on the graves was thin, and there were no wreaths of flowers except those made of immortelles, which looked dirty and draggled from exposure to the weather, to relieve the sad and desolate scene.

"I have had enough of it," remarked Lolo, after a while to her companion ; "let us go, Heinrich ; the place begins to depress me. I should not like to be buried here, for the graves seem so neglected as if the living had completely forgotten the existence of the dead."

"It matters little where we are buried," he answered ; "our work is among the living, and when we are called away humanity has no further need of us, and may well throw our bodies into any corner."

"You men have no sentiment," replied Lolo ; "for my part I should like to know that those I loved lay

buried in a pretty spot. It is not for the dead that we raise monuments, but for the living ; and it seems to me that a beautiful churchyard is a consolation to many."

Poor Heinrich, accused of having no sentiment ! He who was all emotions. He regained with her the entrance to the cemetery feeling exceeding sad, for the marble monument which they had visited was to him a visible sign that their positions to each other had changed, and that she could never be his.

"It is late," remarked Lolo. "You must be hungry, Heinrich ; let us go and get something to eat."

He replied that he would do anything she liked, but that he felt no hunger ; in fact, he was much more inclined to go home and cry.

Opposite to the gateway of the cemetery was a pot-house, where the mutes and drivers of funeral coaches were accustomed to go and have a drink while waiting for the return of the mourners.

"Let us go in there," said Lolo, pointing to the spot ; so they entered and seated themselves at a wooden table in the low parlour. There was not much choice in the way of food, and they had to be satisfied with hot sausages, bread and cheese, and beer.

"It reminds me of many a supper I have had with my father," remarked Lolo ; then, noticing how sad her cousin looked, she said to him : "Heinrich, you really must not be so depressed." Then she cheered him up till, by degrees, he began to recover his spirits and to enjoy the simple fare which had been set before him.

It was late in the afternoon when they separated, and Lolo drove home pleased with her day's excursion, and in high spirits, for she felt the occasional need of emancipating herself from her present surroundings. That night she was invited by some of her aristocratic friends to a luxurions supper, where the table was covered with roses and flowers, but it could not efface from her memory the pleasure which the humble repast in the low pot-house outside the cemetery had given her.

END OF VOL. I.

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